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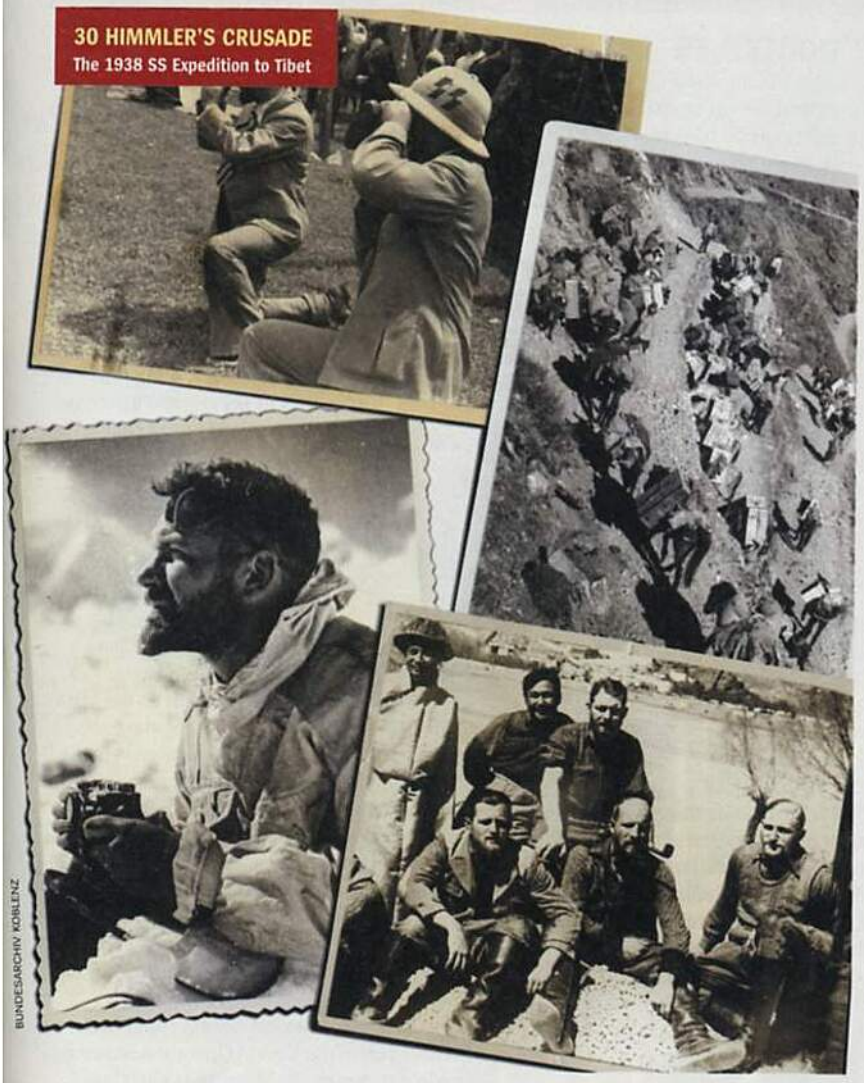

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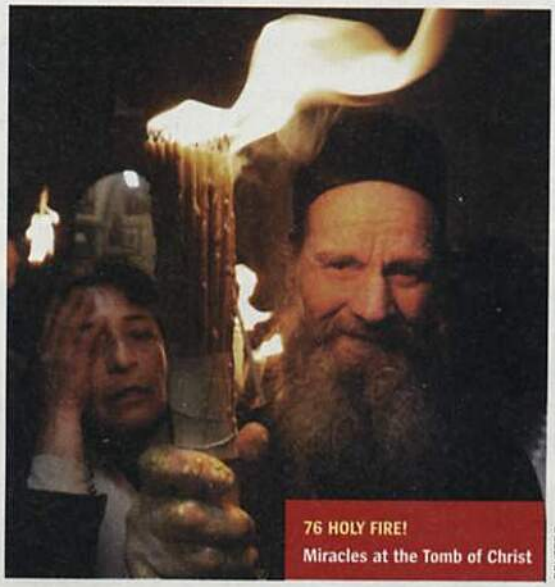

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editorial

Aryan notions

SECRET DOCTRINES

Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer SS, Hitler's 'right hand man' and one of the architects of the 'Final Solution', kept a notebook in which he had copied quotations from the *Baghavad Gita* and the Hindu *Vedas*. Since the 1920s, the young Himmler had been fascinated by Eastern mysticism and mythology, devouring books on reincarnation and karma, reading Hermann Hesse's *Siddartha* and *Damien*, and recording the results of his quest for knowledge in his 'book lists' and notes.

Before he joined the Nazi Party, before he created the black-shirted, latter-day knights of the SS, Himmler already had a vision of Germany's future. Perusing a book called *Freemasons and Anti-Masons in the Battle for World Mastery*, he had noted: "Kshatriya caste, that is what we must be. That is the salvation". The idea of a noble warrior caste that had ruled India nearly two millennia ago was to be the inspiration not just for the elite order of the SS, but for a whole new social structure in the East, where Germanic Brahmins and warriors would rule over the Slavic peasants and serfs, just as in the four-caste system set out in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Perhaps only the Nazis could connect ancient Vedic texts, or the Buddhist notion of detachment from passion, to the wholesale enslavement and murder of other peoples.

But, as documentary maker Christopher Hale points out in his feature (p30), and in greater detail in his new book *Himmler's Crusade*, the SS and the racial theorists of the Third Reich drew on a rich, dangerous mixture of occultism, 'scientific' thinking and *volkisch* sentiment that stretched back to the 19th century German questioning of Christianity, the Blavatskyan 'Secret Doctrine' and the birth of Theosophy.

COVER IMAGE: INTERFOTO-ARCHIV
UFO: ALEX TOMLINSON
IMAGE MANIPULATION: ETIENNE

Reexaming this cultural ferment has allowed writers like Richard Noll, for instance, to misguidedly brand the pscychologist Carl Jung a proto-fascist and Nazi sympathiser; more importantly, though, it allows us to see that many of the key elements of Nazi thought – from racist pseudo-science to Aryan fantasy – were already strong cultural forces in inter-war Germany, only waiting to be systematised and put into practice by Hitler, Himmler, Heydrich and their ilk.

The mythos and mystique of the Nazis has, of course, outlived the brief period in which the 'Thousand Year Reich' actually existed. Hitler and his henchmen have been connected with everything from the practice of Satanism and occult rites to the production of 'man-made UFOs'. As Roy Bainton's article on the Spear of Destiny (p48) makes clear, while Hitler's interest in the Spear was genuine enough, many of the subsequent stories woven around his acquisition of it ring very false indeed. All this fantasy might be harmless enough in the context of a game like *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* (p67), but it can also lead to the dangerous rewritings of history that Kevin McClure debunks in his look at the 'Nazi UFO mythos' (p42).

In the end, the work of German scientists (whisked off to the USA in Operation Paperclip) would put men on the Moon; but the techno-fetishist writings of the Nazi UFO proponents are nothing more than a denial of real history – and, all too often, real human suffering.

DAVID SUTTON

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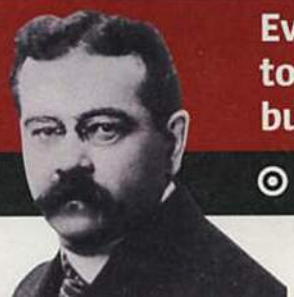
What do we mean by fortean?

Everything you always wanted to know about Fortean Times but were too paranoid to ask!

⊙ SEE PAGE 67



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LEGO play on

POLAR CHEWING
Pursuing the bear necessities in the icy wastes of the frozen north
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The Number of the Beats and more strange numerological mysteries
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ALIEN ZOO
Fish that glow in the dark, a netful of rare beasties and other marine marvels,
PAGE 26

area were slashed. Many of the incidents centred on Eyam and Stoney Middleton in Derbyshire and Fox House outside Sheffield in South Yorkshire.

As with the Hampshire horse-ripping a decade ago, horse owners found themselves in a frenzy of rumour and panic. People began to keep watch in fields, or sit out on roofs all night, but still the attacks continued, some apparently in daylight. While a proportion of the attacks appeared to be sexual, some owners believed that their animals had been bled for cult rituals. For example, Debbie Bell, 35, of Eyam found her family's black Appaloosa pony dead on 12 May, her belly slashed with a knife. Around eight litres of blood appeared to be missing, possibly drained from the stomach area. In another incident, a colt at Fox House was drained through cuts in its legs. It was rumoured that horse blood could sell for £50-£60 a pint, although no evidence of this has been presented.

HORSE DE COMBAT: Debbie Bell examines Brodie's wounds.

SHARON DOORBAR

In late June, detectives in South Yorkshire announced that occult practices were a strong line of inquiry. An officer said: "We have found stone circles in the fields, measuring from eight to 15ft [2.4-4.6m] across, usually made up of small numbers of stones, for example five with one stone in the middle. This is indicative of a five-pointed star but it's open to interpretation. Lines are also drawn in the fields of five or six stones pointing to the centre of the field. At the majority of these sites it does point to occult practices – not paganism or wicca, which celebrate life and the lifecycle, but black arts and the occult calendar."

Arrangements of sticks and sprigs of heather or other greenery have also been left at the scene of some attacks and a sticky, opaque substance painted on gates, trees and horses. Officers from both the Yorkshire and Derbyshire forces led a huge undercover surveillance operation during the summer solstice weekend, but failed to catch anyone.

Attackers leave no footprints or vehicle tracks

"These attacks are planned like a military operation," said Kay Walvin, 43, of Stoney Middleton. "They have occurred in gales, snow, blizzards and torrential rain. Yet they leave no footprints or vehicle tracks." Last October, she found her 22-year-old grey mare with a 10in (25cm) gash to its hindquarters, inflicted with a carpet-fitter's knife. "Later I found a sign like a swastika in blood on the wall," she said. "Then I noticed the horse's tail had been dipped in blood."

It was the first of 76 incidents involving her three horses. On one occasion, a 32in (81cm) Shetland pony was tightly tied up in electrical fence wire and attached to a spike, which pierced its body. Under a tree nearby was a large semicircle of wire and a triangle made of stones and twigs. On the bottom side of the triangle there was another semicircle. All her horses have allegedly been sedated numerous times with a "mystery potion", while a chestnut mare had symbols drawn on its body. "Dozens of times my husband and I have sat up right through the night to keep watch," Mrs Walvin said. "We sometimes see torches and occasionally we have heard voices, but we have never caught anyone."

There were more than 200 horse attacks in western Sweden in 1989-92 [**FT64:18**]. Several recent attacks in Sweden have taken place around Kristianstad in northeastern Skåne. In the first week of June two mares were wounded in their vaginas and hind legs, and another horse was found dead with its throat cut. In late May two other horses in the same region were wounded. Then on 26 June a mare at Viberg in the province of Värmland was found bleeding from the vagina. The animal had three or more deep cuts, both external and internal.

In Germany in the early 1990s, at least 89 horses died from their injuries, many of a violent sexual nature. One prolific horse-ripper was caught in Germany in 1998, and psychiatrists suggested a link between child abuse and horse mutilation; but no single profile of attackers emerged. *Glasgow Herald, 28 Feb; Malmö Metro, Sydsvenskan (Sweden), 5 June; Sheffield Star, 23 June, 3 July; Yorkshire Post, Sheffield Telegraph, 27 June; Guardian, 28 June; Expressen (Sweden), 29 June; D.Mail, 1 July 2003.*

EXTRAEXTRA

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM NEWSPAPERS AROUND THE WORLD

FOX PRAISES PATIENTS WHO OPT OUT OF NHS
D.Telegraph, 8 Oct 2002.

ANGELS ARE ABLE TO REGAIN THEIR FORM
NY Times, 9 Oct 2002.

HITLER PLANNED '9/11' ATTACK ON NEW YORK SKYSCRAPERS
Ananova, 9 Oct 2002.

KILLERS OFTEN UNDONE BY THEIR OWN MISTAKES
Associated Press, 11 Oct 2002.

AGEING POPULATION IS DRAINING BLOOD BANKS, SAY DOCTORS
Independent, 11 Oct 2002.

ALIENS LIKELY TO GET REPRIEVE AFTER FLOODS
Bangkok Post, 11 Oct 2002.

FIREBALLS ENLISTED IN BATTLE AGAINST BATS
Bangkok Post, 12 Oct 2002.

LEADER HIJACKED BY TORY GHOSTS
Melbourne Sunday Age, 13 Oct 2002.

BUDGIE SET FOR LANDING
Adelaide Advertiser, 14 Oct 2002.

DOCTOR SUSPENDED OVER ORGANS
D.Telegraph, 16 Oct 2002.

SHARK KEEPS $80M LUXURY YACHT ON ICE
Adelaide Advertiser, 16 Oct 2002.

KIDS PAY HIGH PRICE FOR THEIR INVISIBILITY
Adelaide Advertiser, 16 Oct 2002.

SENIOR CENTER TO ROAST XENIA MAN
Dayton (OH) Daily News, 17 Oct 2002.

TIGERS SET TO BE THROWN TO CHRISTIAN
Guardian, 21 Oct 2002.

GHOSTWRITERS WORK WITH MOOSE
Washington Post, 23 Oct 2002.

Here's mud in your eye!

...and pretty much everywhere else, as Filipinos celebrate John the Baptist's birthday

In honour of their patron saint, John the Baptist, residents of the Filipino village of Bibiclat gathered in silence in a swampy field to cover themselves in mud and don mud-drenched capes made of banana leaves. "St John used mud to baptise Jesus," explained a villager.

The festival dates back to modern Bibiclat's ancestors, who showed their devotion by covering their bodies and faces in mud and putting on banana leaf capes to attend Mass. Parish priest William Villaviza said the mud "reminds one of the lowness of one's being," and is a way of being "close to the earth".

The Martyrology of Jerome, the Calendar of Carthage and the sermons of Augustine all emphasise that John the Baptist's principal feast of 24 June is that of his earthly birthday. *[AP] 24 June 2003.*

AARON FAVILA/AP PHOTO

Horse-Rippers Return

A new series of brutal attacks on horses in England's Peak District has resulted in serious injuries and even death

SHARON DOORBAR

SILENT WITNESS: Debbie Bell with Brodie, who shared a field with the dead Appaloosa and has often been attacked.

Since the heyday of livestock-maiming in the 19th century, there have been hundreds of attacks on horses in Britain, with several periods of intense activity, such as the wave of mutilations in Hampshire from 1988 to 1996 – mainly in the Meon Valley and the New Forest – peaking with scores of cases in 1993. There were 27 arrests, but no one was charged. During the same period, equine mutilations also occurred across the country from Cornwall to Humberside, Kent to the Scottish Borders. One in four incidents seemed to be sexual in nature [**FT66:12, 68:46-47, 94:22-28**].

Many attacks took place during the full moon, prompting suggestions of pagan or satanic cults, although the more prosaic explanation was that strong moonlight made it easier to get around at night. Others suggested rivalry within the equine community – assailants appeared to have detailed anatomical knowledge as well as remarkable empathy with their victims (horse whispering?) to avoid being kicked. Experts suspected the use of sedative drugs, but forensic evidence was lacking. The finger of blame was also pointed at stable hands with grudges, psychotic vets or sado-machochistic zoophiles. Nick Pope, the MOD bureaucrat trumpeted by the tabloids as the British Fox Mulder, implied an extraterrestrial connection to the Hampshire attacks, linking them to US cattle mutilations.

In the last two years, attacks in Scotland, Wales, East Anglia and Nottinghamshire have been accompanied by a new element of apparent black magic. Near the injured horses, stone cairns covered in burnt horse hair and candles have been found, sometimes accompanied by carved pentagrams and double-headed axes [**FT171:32-33**].

A new wave of attacks has been taking place in the Peak District since October 2002. In one 17-day period there were 17 incidents involving more than a dozen horses. Further north on 16 June, a horse grazing at stables near Wetherby was found with a deep wound to its shoulder, while another horse suffered a similar attack at a nearby farm. The following weekend, a sheep had its throat cut and two other horses in the same

PAT ROQUE/AP PHOTO

AARON FAVILA/AP PHOTO

AARON FAVILA/AP PHOTO

SIDELINES...

CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM

A brass band conductor impaled himself on his wooden baton during an enthusiastic performance of Land of Hope and Glory. David Trilling, 63, was rehearsing for his own retirement concert with Weston Brass, a 25-piece band based in Weston-super-Mare, when the baton went through the palm of his left hand. Ignoring the pain, he finished conducting with the broken baton. The wood was removed under anæsthetic and had not caused any permanent damage. *Times, Weston & Somerset Mercury, 23 May 2003.*

BLUE ICE LAWSUIT

In an unprecedented legal settlement, Ray Erikson from Santa Cruz, California, won $3,236 (around £1,985) from American Airlines after one of the company's planes released two chunks of toilet waste, known as "blue ice", which damaged the skylight of his boat. In some unexplained way, he tracked down the plane – Flight 1950 – and sued in the small claims court. *[AP] 15 June 2003.*

FEATHER BRAINED

"One could call it art, but for me it is a social realistic experiment with birds," said Magne Klann, a Norwegian artist who is staging an on-line version of *Big Brother* with birds instead of people. *Independent, – April 2003.*

MARTIN ROSS

SADDAM THE HERO

Saddam Hossein, an eight-year-old boy from Chittagong, Bangladesh, stopped a train carrying more than 1,500 university students from crashing. Noticing broken tracks on a railway line, he tied his red shirt to a bamboo stick and waved it as a warning. *Bournemouth Daily Echo, 15 May 2003.*

BOTH PICS: AP PHOTO / US NAVY

BEAR WITH A SORE TOOTH: The ursine investigator safely snapped through the submarine *Connecticut's* periscope.

Animal wreckers and rescues

SUBMARINE SANDWICH

A polar bear gnawed on the rudder of US submarine *Connecticut* after the sub broke through the ice in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, on 27 April. In a series of pictures captured on the periscope's camera, the bear apparently chewed on the rudder for half an hour, then batted it around. Eventually, it abandoned its metallic munching and padded off across the ice ridges in search of a tastier snack. The Navy later reported that damage to the 353ft (108m) long SSN-21 Seawolf-class sub – which has a crew of more than 120 and is armed with Tomahawk cruise missiles and torpedoes – was minimal.

Polar bears are federally protected marine mammals, but biologists in Anchorage hadn't heard about this encounter. "It would be very unusual for polar bears to be north of the 80th parallel, as there are very few places with open water," said spokeswoman Catherine Pearson. *D.Mail, Sydney D.Telegraph, 29 May; Anchorage Daily News, 30 May 2003.*

ANIMAL RESCUES

The matriarch of a herd of South African elephants deliberately opened a gate to free antelopes being held in the Thula Thula reserve in northern KwaZulu-Natal. A private company had rounded up the antelopes near Empangeni to relocate them for a breeding programme. The capture team was settling in for the night when a herd of 11 elephants approached. At first they thought the elephants were attracted to the bales of alfalfa being used to feed the antelopes; but they watched in amazement as the herd's matriarch, known locally as Nana, carefully undid all the gate's metal latches with her trunk, swung the gate open and stood back to watch the antelopes run into the night. Not giving the alfalfa a second glance, the elephants sauntered off. Ecologist Brendon Whittington-Jones said: "This behaviour is certainly most unusual and cannot be explained in scientific terms." *Daily Telegraph, 9 April; [AFP] 10 April; Vancouver Sun, 11 April 2003.*

The elephants deliberately opened a gate to free antelopes

Wally, a two-year-old Albino wallaby, escaped into woodland from Noah's Ark Zoo in Bristol after three pot-bellied pigs dug a tunnel under his enclosure. He'd been sent to the zoo from Bournemouth to breed. "One of our female wallabies, Wendy, was ready to breed," said zoo owner Christina Bush. "She's very amorous and kept making advances towards him. I'm not sure he liked it. She can be quite pushy." Although Wally returned to the zoo at night to feed on vegetables, he had eluded staff for two weeks at the time of the report. The Kuni Kuni pigs that dug the tunnel didn't try to escape. "They love their food. That's why they stayed behind," said Ms Bush. *Ananova, 14 Mar 2003.*

DOG PUZZLE

A dog called Vodi was found nursing three kittens on 29 March at Winterveld, near Pretoria in South Africa. Locals believed she had given birth to them and blamed witchcraft. Elijah Mhlanga, Vodi's owner, said her behaviour changed after she disappeared some time earlier. "When she came back last Sunday [30 March], she was different," he said. "She hid from us and stopped barking. She also refused to eat. On Monday my grandchildren called me and said Vodi had given birth to kittens. I didn't believe them. I thought the puppies just looked like kittens to them." He went to see for himself and was shocked to find Vodi nursing three kittens that she tried to hide under her belly when people came to look. *News24.com 30 Mar; Ananova, 1 April 2003.*

Coma not a full stop

EUROPICS

ROCK REVIVAL

A German woman woke from a seven-year coma after being taken to see Bryan Adams in concert. Christiane Kittel (above), now 24, was a pupil at her local school in Regensburg when a lung embolism sent her into a coma in 1997. Her mother, Adelheid Kittel, said: "Bryan Adams was always her biggest hero. When I heard about the concert in Regensburg I knew that I had to take her there. Christiane was sitting in her special wheelchair and suddenly she started showing reactions that for seven years we have been dreaming of. She opened her eyes and actually watched what was going on, she started to move in the wheelchair, and she was totally fascinated by the music and the singer. When we got back to the clinic she was still animated, and three times she called my name, she said 'Mama'." Her doctor, Gerhard Weber, confirmed she had suffered no relapses since her recovery.
Ananova, 12 Mar 2003.

OUT FOR 19 YEARS

Terry Wallis (seen at right with his mother, Angelee or Auelheid) of Big Flat, Arkansas, was 20 and newly-married with a six-week-old daughter when his pickup plunged through a guard rail, tumbling 25ft (7.6m) on Friday, 13 July 1984. Mr Wallis was found unconscious and paralysed from the neck down. He remained in a coma and for the next 19 years. He received no specialist care as his family was too poor to afford a neurological examination, but his mother made the 50-mile (80km) return journey to the nursing home in Mount View to see him twice a week, talking to him for hours, with no idea whether he understood her. On alternate weekends and special occasions, his family took him home.

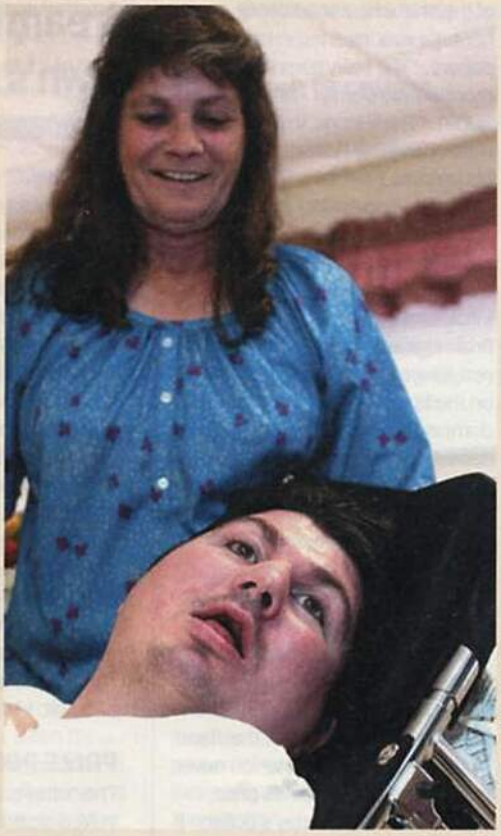
A while back (his family can't recall exactly when), he began to respond to questions with grunts of assent or disagreement. On Friday, 13 June, his mother was making a visit, and as always the nurse asked him who his visitor was. Mr Wallis, now 39, opened his eyes and said "Mom". Then he mentioned his favourite drink, Pepsi. After that, milk. Eventually, his mother asked him, "Terry, what can you say?" and he replied, "Anything I want." His daughter Amber is now 19, and he is determined to walk again for her, although doctors say the prognosis is not good. *[AP] D.Telegraph, 10 July; Guardian, 11 July 2003.*

BEDSIDE VIGIL REWARDED

In China, Jin Meihu had spent four-and-a-half years in a coma after suffering serious brain injuries in a fall from her bicycle before regaining consciousness in June. While doctors had not believed recovery was likely, her husband, retired soldier Li Zhongui, maintained his faith that Jin would one day get better.

Throughout the whole four-and-a-half-year period, Li refused to leave his wife, spending every night at her hospital bedside taking care of her. He even refused treatment for burns when he had scalded his foot with boiling water, not wanting to miss a night's vigil.

His devotion was finally rewarded when Jin woke, smiled and nodded at him. Li believed his lengthy army service had helped him "stick to what I believed in." *Ananova, 10 June 2003.*



AP PHOTO / DANNY JOHNSTON

SIDELINES...

NOD TO THE ZEITGEIST

A couple from Hubei in China have named their son Saddam Deng Sars. He was born on 20 March, the day the Iraq war broke out and at a time when alarm over the Sars outbreak was spreading across China. *[DPA] 13 May 2003.*

ACRONYM ALARM

The Suffolk Accident Rescue Service has vetoed a change to its name despite the panic created by the logo on its car – SARS Doctor. The Ipswich-based charity was founded over 30 years ago. There's also a drink called Sars, produced by the Hey Song Company in Taiwan. *Newsweek, 5 May; D.Telegraph, 24 May 2003.*

PHENOMENAL FALL

From the Dhaka *Independent*, a few months back: "Light rain likely toady".

NOT YOU AGAIN

College lecturer Elaine Miklewicz, 46, was driving to work when a car hit her from behind on the A13 near Grays in Essex. It was the same driver who had crashed into her at exactly the same place at the same time (8am) virtually a year earlier to the day. "It happened just a day after I got the £2,500 insurance cheque for the first prang," she said. *Sun, 18 April 2003.*

FATAL RE-RUN

John Jardine died in a car wreck on Wolf's Crossing Road in Oswego, Michigan – at exactly the same spot where his brother was killed in a similar smash-up nine years earlier. *NY Post, 1 May 2003.*

GRASSED UP

A sailor, serving in the war in Iraq, returned home to Edinburgh to find a neighbour had started legal proceedings as he hadn't paid his share of the cost of cutting a communal lawn during his 86 days at sea. *Aberdeen Press & Journal, 6 May 2003.*

ZOO TO A KILL

A zoo in China has scrapped one of its special attractions – renting out rifles so that visitors could shoot some of the animals. Mianjiang mountain park, in the northeastern city of Dandong, set aside a shooting area, but has now bowed to protests from animal lovers. *Sunday Times, 22 June 2003.*

SIDELINES...

HONESTY PAYS

Months of job-seeking drove Angelika Wedberg, 30, from Goteborg in Sweden to place this ad in *Goteborgs-Posten* on 20 April: "I want a well-paid job. I have no imagination, I'm anti-social, uncreative and untalented." The offers flooded in, and she landed a job with a company called Map Media at 18,000 kroner (£1,360) a month – an increase of more than a third on her previous job as a care worker for the elderly. *[R] Guardian, 22 April 2003.*

EASY MONEY

A market research company, paid £20,000 to find a name for a college and university that are to merge in Bradford, produced its report after three months' work. The company suggests Bradford University, University of Bradford or The University of Bradford. *Sunday Times, 27 April 2003.*

LESOTHO 'POLTERGEIST'

On 21 July 2002, a loud noise was heard over most of the African country of Lesotho and objects began to fall on the roofs of houses in the village of Boqate Ha Sofonia. 'Malino Mantsoe saw a large stone narrowly miss her house and blamed a *thokolosi* (poltergeist). Investigators collected over 400 stones from nine villages and said they had come from a disintegrating meteorite, dubbed the Thuathe meteorite. *BBC News, 22 April 2003.*

CONTINENTAL DRIFT

For the first time, meteorological analysis has shown that dust blown up in a huge storm in China's Taklimakan desert migrated 12,000 miles (19,300km) across the Pacific, North America and the Atlantic between 25 February and 7 March 1990, when it settled in the French Alps. *[AP] 8 June 2003.*

TEDDYBEARS' PICNIC

Five brown bears invaded a luxury fishing lodge in Anchorage, Alaska, in search of food. In the course of breaking in to Katmai Lodge, they destroyed 53 doors, as well as freezers, incinerators, windows and a popcorn machine. For three nights, they binged on flour, sugar, salt, cake mix, tinned food, and portions of kitchen floor. The repair bill was $50,000 (£30,300). *[AP] 24 April 2003.*

One born every minute

It seems there is nothing is so ridiculous that true believers can't be found

DAVE NEEDHAM

UTAH'S VIKING PAST

A series of advertisements informing people in southwest Utah of their hitherto secret Viking heritage was inserted in local papers. "The story goes like this," reported the *Denver Post* (26 June 2003). "The Vikings, including King Harold 'The Fair-Haired' Haarfarger, his son Eric Blodoks and others, first landed on April 1, 956, on a coral island in the Pacific Ocean. But small volcanic eruptions jostled off the island's cap, and set it and its inhabitants adrift in the ocean. A final huge volcanic explosion and resulting tsunami carried the island, on the tip of the giant wave, and dumped it inland – far inland – on a desert plateau in Utah. Right here by Cedar City.

"Most island dwellers survived the event, of course, and so the Vikings lived peacefully alongside the Paiute Indians in a settlement called Himmelsk, until a nosey President James Polk sent an expedition in 1845 to explore the area. Eventually, the Vikings were found and cheated out of their land by the US government, which never paid the negotiated sales price, US$88.7 billion in today's dollars. If only the rightful Blodoks royal family heirs could be found, this could all be set right."

It was all a ruse dreamt up by the town's mayor

A number of Utah residents believed this bollocks. One came forward to claim the Viking artefacts described in the advertisements. Another claimed he owned the mould the swords were cast from. There was speculation that the text was linked to the Book of Mormon. But it was all a ruse dreamt up by the mayor of Cedar City, Gerald Sherratt, in order to promote a Viking festival in the town. "Sherratt says he wants the new festival to have all the idiocy of Mardi Gras without the booze or the raunch," reports the *Post*. "There will be a royal procession down Main Street. The Himmelsk armed forces, with catapult, will march."

PRIZE POPPYCOCK

The "utter-tosh-of-the-week award" in *New Scientist*'s Feedback column on 21 June went to the makers of QLink, who describe their product as follows: "The QLink is at the absolute cutting edge of quantum physics technology... Most people have heard of molecules and atoms, but if one was to go even smaller (sub-atomic) one would find electrons, and even smaller than that photons and quarks. Imagine going even smaller (Super String Theory) and discovering a group of minute energies. They vibrate, or resonate, with each other (in sympathetic resonance). They are the most elementary form of energy.

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"This is what happens when you wear the QLink Pendant. It in effect communicates with your body's own energy, which itself becomes more refined, clarified and strengthened... The result is that people who wear the QLink will have more energy, be less prone to suffer from headaches and sleep better..." ...and learn to fly, win the lottery regularly and live for ever.

MAXIMALIST REWARDED

A bin-liner full of air helped Ceal (short for Cecilia) Floyer win a £30,000 bursary from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation last October. *Garbage Bag* (materials: plastic bag, air and tie twist) is one of a series of 'pieces' by Floyer, 34, a graduate of Goldsmiths art college, who calls herself a "maximalist" to distinguish her work from minimalism. The judges said several of Floyer's works merited attention, including *Light Switch* (a light switch) and *Monochrone Till Receipt (White)* (a checkout receipt listing 36 white items bought at a supermarket). The judges described her work as "highly sophisticated, succinct and elegant". *D.Telegraph, 18 Oct 2002.*

FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS

SEEKING SEPARATION [FT160:27]

Laleh and Ladan Bijani, the 29-year-old Iranian twins joined at the head, died from massive blood loss on 8 July in the Raffles Hospital, Singapore. A team of 28 surgeons and 100 medical staff had operated for 52 hours, but failed to separate them safely. Their fused skulls were thicker than expected and took longer to cut through. Then their brains, although separate, were found to be adhering strongly to each other because of the length of time they had lain pressed together. The surgeons re-routed the vein that drained blood from both brains with one taken from Ladan's thigh – but they were unable to stem the bleeding and the sisters died within 90 minutes of each other.

The first successful operation to separate conjoined twins was in 1689, but it was only in the 1950s that the operation became commonplace. Craniopagus twins (those joined at the head) make up some four per cent of conjoined twins. No adult craniopagus twins have ever been successfully separated, although surgeons in Singapore had managed to separate babies born with the condition – and surgeons in Texas are preparing to separate Ahmed and Mohamed Ibrahim, two-year-old craniopagus twins from Egypt. In 2002, two-year-old craniopagus twins from Guatemala were successfully separated in Los Angeles.

The Bijani twins, born into a poor family of 11 children in Firouzabad in 1974 and adopted at the age of two by Alireza Safaian, a Tehran doctor, graduated from Tehran law school in 2000. They had been seeking separation for many years, but hospitals around the world had turned them down for the last 15 years, saying the risk was too great. They wanted to pursue separate careers, Laleh as a journalist in Tehran and Ladan as a lawyer in their home town of Shiraz. *Guardian, 8+14 July; D.Telegraph, Independent, 9 July 2003.*

CROC HOT SPOTS [FT174:9]

A day or two after the sighting of a putative crocodile in a lake in Channock, Staffordshire, on 14 June, Richard Lacey, 56, a bridgekeeper at Sellars Bridge on the Gloucester and Sharpness canal near Hardwicke, confirmed local rumours when he spotted a 3.5ft (1m) croc-like beast leaping out of the water in pursuit of a duck just outside the Pilot pub. It was tentatively identified as a cayman, a South American relative of the alligator. "People who come here have talked about it before and I believe something is in there," said Kim Wakelam, 35, the pub landlord. The reptile has been part of folklore in Hardwicke for the last four years. Villagers use it to scare the children out of swimming in the canal. *Gloucestershire Echo, 19 June; Gloucester Citizen, Times, Sun, 20 June 2003.*

While the hunt for a rumoured crocodilian in a reservoir outside Madrid was scaled down, police in Rome snared a 6.5ft (2m) crocodile in the river Tiber on 6 July, only to discover it was a stuffed hunting trophy. Two intrepid police officers who answered an emergency call swooped onto a city centre riverbank after passers-by had seen the croc, jaws agape, apparently closing in on a child. One officer clobbered the beast with stones as the other moved in, watched by hundreds of people from the city's Garibaldi bridge in the Trastevere tourist area. Sportingly, the cops later posed for pictures with their catch for Italian newspapers. Police are hoping a burgeoning urban legend has been nipped in the bud, after several sightings of a crocodile in various parts of Rome over the previous week. *[AFP] 7 July 2003.*

VIRGIN VISION IN GLASS [FT174:7]

Pilgrims flocking to Milton Hospital near Boston, Massachusetts, to see the window smudge interpreted as an image of the Virgin Mary spotted another apparition on a hospital chimney about 100ft (30m) away. Some saw a cross, while others saw another vision of the Virgin Mary. Believers see the image in the bright red brick surrounded by soot, about 5ft (1.5m) from the top of the chimney. Connie Buckley of West Roxbury said she saw two crosses on the hospital's chimney. "They're very pronounc-ed," she said. "I believe it's letting everyone know that God is aware and present, along with the Virgin Mary." One believer said she saw the Virgin Mary sitting down, while another saw her holding the baby Jesus. *Boston Globe, 24 June 2003.*

FAIRY BUSH RECOVERS [FT169:8]

In August 2002, someone with a chainsaw chopped all the branches from the celebrated Latoon fairy tree or *sceach*, a white thorn bush near Newmarket-in-Fergus in County Clare, Ireland. Folklorist Eddie Lenihan warned of a curse on anyone who damaged the sceach, which he said was a rendezvous point for Kerry fairies to discuss tactics on their way to do battle with the Connacht fairies. The vandal was never apprehended, but perhaps he was felled by the curse. In May 2003, the sceach confounded all expectations by sprouting leaves gain. "The fairies are able to look after their own property," said Mr Lenihan. *Irish Examiner, 31 May; Irish Times, 2 June 2003.*

SIDELINES...

YOU DON'T SAY!

A topless woman hanging upside down from the back of a train threw rocks at railway officials who approached her and told them to go away. The woman, in her early thirties, was spotted as the train approached a bridge in Hoquiam, Washington State. A police spokesman said: "We believe she may have been under the influence of alcohol." *Sunday Times, 8 June 2003.*

BLINDING PROTEST

A man held at Athens airport over an outstanding three-month jail sentence for a minor offence forced his eyes out of their sockets in protest at his arrest. Remi Tsolakis, 30, said that he couldn't afford a fine in lieu of a jail sentence. Doctors were trying to save his eyesight. *[AP] 20 May 2003.*

SACRIFICE BID

A 41-year-old Muslim man entered St Margaret's Church, Uxbridge, Middlesex, on 8 April during a service attended by 200 pupils from St Andrew's Primary School. He ran up to the altar and lay down his one-year-old son before pulling out a knife and trying to stab the baby. He was overpowered by two church workers and a teacher. *D.Mail, Sun, 10 April 2003.*

DUNG ROAMIN

New Delhi is set to round up its 35,000 stray cows, keep them in pens, and sell their dung to the USA, where homegrown cowshit is insufficiently organic. *Independent on Sunday, 15 June 2003.*

CRAPPY CHARMS

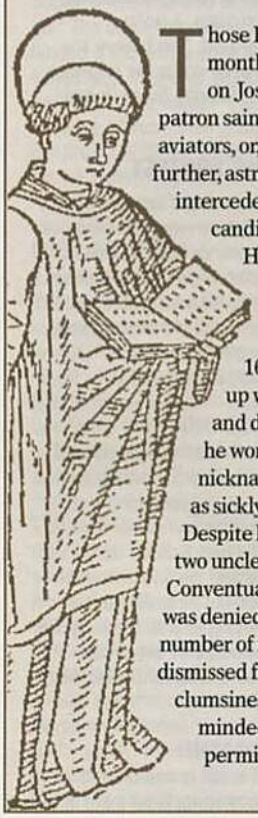
Koji Fujii, 52, a Japanese entrepreneur from Kyoto, is marketing gold-coated lumps of human excrement as lucky charms. The Japanese words for 'luck' and 'poo' are very similar. The 7cm (2.8in) nuggets cost 14 Euro each. *Irish Examiner, 19 April 2003.*

MARTIN ROSS

† FOR ALL THE SAINTS

FORTEAN TALES FROM THE CHURCH
COMPILED BY GRENADINE GRAY

THIS MONTH: Joseph Desa of Copertino († 1663)



Those Forteans holidaying this month will be pleased to call on Joseph, in his capacity as patron saint of air travellers and aviators, or, for those going a little further, astronauts. Joseph also intercedes on behalf of degree candidates and examinees. His feast day is 18 September.

Born to extremely poor parents on 17 June 1603, Joseph was brought up with equally strict piety and discipline. Even as a child he wore a hair shirt. Joseph was nicknamed 'the gaper' and was as sickly as he was dull-witted. Despite his religious fervour, and two uncles in the Order of Conventual Franciscans, Joseph was denied admittance into any number of monasteries, and dismissed from countless others for clumsiness, ignorance and absent-mindedness. Eventually he was permitted to work as a stable boy for the Conventual Franciscans, and worked his way up to being ordained priest in 1628.

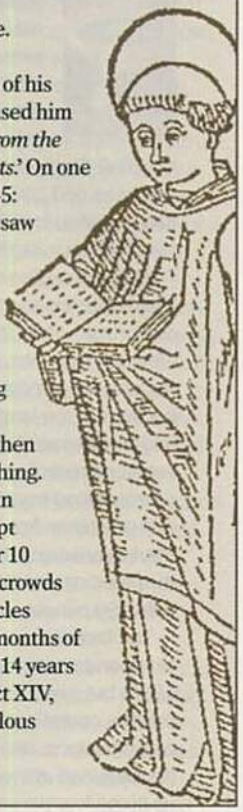
The first five years of his priesthood passed without his consuming bread or wine. He customarily lived only on herbs and dried fruit; in fact his diet was so severe that the only way to mark Fridays and Lent was with almost entire abstention.

Joseph's life was plagued by strange experiences – soon after his ordination reports spread of his frequent raptures and miracles, and began to draw crowds to him. The numbers who visited him were so vast that his superiors became desperate, and the Inquisition extremely interested. At one stage he was kept in a Capuchin friary in strict enclosure, forbidden even to receive or write letters; bewildered, Joseph likened this to prison. But, though moved from convent to convent to evade the crowds and his troublesome fame, many of Joseph's supporters were politically extremely powerful and '*persons of the highest distinction*'. John Frederick, Duke of Brunswick and Hanover, after seeing Joseph, converted from Lutheranism to Catholicism. Pope Urban VIII offered to testify personally to his integrity. Eyewitness accounts from popes and dukes are of course unchallengeable.

What made Joseph so distinctive was the nature of his ecstatic behaviour – it caused him to experience '*upliftings from the ground and prolonged flights*.' On one ambassadorial visit in 1645:

> He entered the church, saw a statue of Our Lady over the altar and straightaway flew some 12 paces above the onlookers to its feet, and after a while, 'uttering his customary shrill cry', returned to the floor and then to his cell, having said nothing.

Joseph ended his days in seclusion, having been kept constantly on the move for 10 years in order to keep the crowds at bay, as his strange miracles occurred even in the last months of his life. He was canonised 14 years after his death by Benedict XIV, who alluded to his miraculous levitations.



Monastic curse

Frasinei monastery was built on a hill in Romania in the 18th century, to the design of Saint Calinic, an orthodox bishop. On 17 January 1867, a board was erected in front of the monastery bearing the following warning: "Women are forbidden to set foot in this monastery because they would disturb the monks with scandals. If a woman breaks this interdiction, a curse will afflict her."

According to the monastery's records, every woman ignoring this warning has fallen victim to the curse. A woman from the village of Muiereasca began to suffer from epilepsy after slipping into the building. In 1956, the bodies of three women dressed in Soviet uniforms were found in the neighbouring forest. The cause of death was unknown. In 1988, a woman sneaked into the monastery dressed as a man, and subsequently lost her mind and was sent to a mental hospital. Frasinei is the centre of exorcism in Romania. It is said that some demons, expelled from their human hosts, are transformed into crows.

Evenimentul Zilei (Romania), 16 Mar 2003.

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ufology

ANDY ROBERTS & DR DAVID CLARKE present their regular survey of the latest fads and flaps from the world of flying saucery

Rendlesham hoaxed?

CORBIS

Just when you thought it was safe to go down to the woods again... along comes another 'final exposé' of the Rendlesham UFO incident. Since 1981, ufologists have interpreted the mystery as a downed spaceship, the crash or malfunction of a satellite or 'black' project, a lighthouse or lightship, the ravings of drug-addled servicemen... or plain old misperception (see **FT152:28-32**).

Now it can revealed that the 'real' truth is much more down-to-earth – in the form of a battered old police car! Practical joker Kevin Conde, a former security policeman at the base, came clean on a recent edition of BBC East's *Inside Out*. In the programme, Conde (pronounced 'Condy'), together with prime witness John Burroughs, drove a stake into the sacred heart of the case with some timely, if unpalatable, revelations.

Conde decided to speak out after reading "nonsense" written about the case on a US veterans website. The former airman revealed that during the three-day UFO scare on the USAF base complex in Suffolk he had played a prank on bored colleagues: "I drove my patrol car out of sight from the gatehouse, turned on the red and blue emergency lights and pointed white flashlights through the mist into the air," said Conde. Minutes later the base's radio system was crackling with chatter about UFOs.

Researcher James Easton makes a convincing case that Conde's 'con' took place on the night that the base deputy commander Colonel Halt led a team into the forest looking for UFOs. This resulted in the famous 'Halt tape', which refers to an assortment of moving coloured lights, and beams of light, seen inside the forest. Coincidence? Our training as forteans encourages us to take coincidences very seriously...

The Rendlesham UFO incident is a kaleidoscope of testimony

In another scoop, key witness John Burroughs, in his first interview for many years, was scathing about the way ex-colleagues Colonel Halt and Sergeant Penniston had "sensationalised" the case. In the popularly accepted version of events, Burroughs and Penniston approached the 'landed' UFO after gaining permission to investigate strange lights in Rendlesham forest. Penniston claims he examined a solid object and noted bizarre symbols etched upon its structure. However, Burroughs – who was standing close by – says all he saw were "lights" he could not identify.

While believers dismiss the claim that the nearby Orfordness lighthouse played *any* part in the episode, Burroughs admits the team went on to chase an unknown light which, after a two mile trek, was positively identified as the lighthouse. If the airmen were initially mistaken about the source of *this* light, and bearing in mind the contradictory stories of Burroughs and Penniston, who knows what it was they initially saw in the forest?

Reactions to these revelations were entirely predictable. As it was the "silly season", the media decided to gloss over the more difficult facts and simply announce the whole case was a hoax. UFO buffs who have staked their reputations – and book royalties – upon the case made fools of themselves by dismissing Conde's story without studying his full testimony. No one, least of all Conde, has claimed his prank explains all the events of the two nights in December 1980. But those who dismiss his claims as "contradictory" are quite happy to accept equally contradictory stories that support the version of events they want to believe.

The Rendlesham UFO incident is a kaleidoscope of testimony and belief, with no one explanation satisfying everyone. The only established fact is that no solid physical evidence has emerged, only more stories. Like the other famous case beginning with R, no matter what new evidence surfaces, the myth of extraterrestrial visitation will continue.

So, if you're not satisfied with this ultimate solution to Britain's Roswell, don't worry, there will be another one along shortly!

www.rendlesham.com; www.bbc.co.uk

Not to be outdone, America's Rendlesham Forest Incident has been in the news again recently. During the annual Roswell festival in July, a stone was raised to commemorate one of the locations where 'something' crashed to Earth in July 1947. Julie Scuster, director of Roswell's UFO Museum believes the stone is a tribute to the brave witnesses who came forward to report what they saw and heard in that New Mexico summer. Twenty hardy souls made the trip some 65 miles (105km) north of Roswell to witness the dedication of the stone, which will now become a stopping place on the crashed saucer pilgrimage route.

Commemorative plaques marking UFO landing sites are not new, however. America has had several, including Aurora, Texas, where a mystery airship crashed in 1897; and at the viewing spot for the Marfa Lights.

The UK's only such location was at Dechmont Woods in southern Scotland, which marked the site of forester Bob Taylor's fascinating but little-known encounter (see FT31:30, 56:48, 60:63, 64:9). Here, in 1979, Taylor was accosted by a large 'craft' which emitted two black spiky objects. They attached themselves to his trousers and he lost consciousness. The perforated trousers – all that remained of the forester's encounter with the unknown – are now the ufological equivalent of a holy relic. The local council commissioned a plaque in 1988, but sadly it was stolen some time later and has never been replaced.

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43. MULE STRAIN

"A mule is a symbol of sterility. For instances of fertility in mules, look over indexes of the *Field*. As to anything else that we're taking as absolute truth – look it up." – Fort, *Books*, pp611-2.

An abundance of foal play? Alas, I have no *Field* indexes at hand to look up. But I can anciently supplement the subject's notice in **FT168:09** which mentions a recent case in Morocco, asserts that there have only been 60 known births since 1527, and quotes without attribution the Roman proverb 'cum mula peperit'.

This last occurs in Suetonius (*Life of Galba*, ch4 para2) and Greekly in Dio Cassius (*Roman History*, bk64 ch1 para3). Both retail the same anecdote. The aged general Galba quoted this adage to scorn prophecies that he would become emperor – a mule promptly foaled, and he did. Galba's contemporary, Pliny (*Natural History*, bk8 ch44 para173), does not mention this episode: "A number of cases of reproduction by mules are recorded in our Annals, but these were considered portentous."

Theophrastus states that mules breed commonly in Cappadocia, but their mules are peculiar. Many Greek records state that a foal has been got by a mare coupled with a 'hinnus' (cf. English 'hinny' –BB), which means a small mule."

Explaining mules' sterility, Aelian (*History Of Animals*, bk12 ch16) knows only one story, culled from the Greek scientist Democritus: "A mare became pregnant from violation by an ass. Men were its pupils in this violent deed and presently accustomed themselves to use of the offspring."

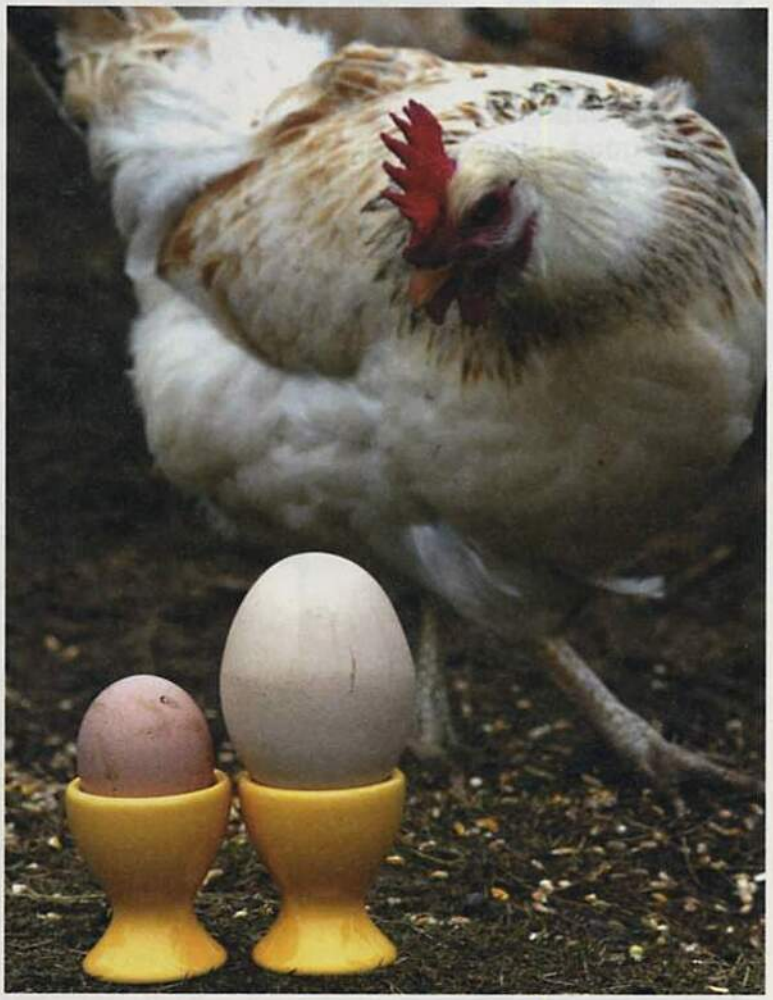
Cicero (*On Divination*, bk2 ch22 para49) observed: "A mule giving birth is an amazing event, one that rarely occurs." Augustine, by contrast (*On Christian Doctrine*, bk2 ch36), had read of many cases. Juvenal (*Satires*, vo13 v66) classifies mule births as freakish. His 19th-century editor, JEB Mayor, adds: "Several modern naturalists allow the credibility of this. I remember the late famous Link saying in his lectures that he had seen in Portugal a mule that had foaled."

Livy (*History Of Rome*, bk26 ch23 para5, bk37 ch3 para6) records two foaling mules in 210 & 190 BC, both at Reate in Italy. Julius Obsequens (*Book Of Prodigies*, chs52,65,70) culls Italian cases from Livy's lost books for the years 93/50/42BC, claiming these prognosticated "civil strife, the overthrow of the Republic, destruction of respectable citizens, and unseemly child-bearing among married women" – ominous indeed.

The proverb was Greek before it was Roman – it still is in neighbouring Albania ('kur të pjellë mushka'). Herodotus (*Histories*, bk3 ch151 paras3-4) recounts how the Babylonians taunted the besieging Persians with "You'll capture our city when mules have foals!" Twenty months later, a mule did, and Darius duly captured Babylon – I thought of offering this one to Saddam Hussein.

Later (bk7 ch3 para5), he tells how Darius' son Xerxes, about to invade Greece, dismissed a foaling mule as of no consequence, especially odd since this curious birth also sported a double set, male and female, of sexual organs. Odder still, Xerxes also made light of a mule giving birth to a hare – Herodotus claims this was a clear prophecy that he would march grandly into Greece but come running back with tail between legs – hare today, gone tomorrow?

Hen lays giant egg



BOTH PICS: PA PHOTOS

Freda Smith, 73, has been keeping chickens for 50 years at her home at Butley near Woodbridge, Suffolk, and at present has 10. In late April she found an egg three times normal size – 8in (20cm) in circumference and weighing 7oz (198g). "The eggs we normally get are about two ounces [57g]," said the retired school cook. "We've had the odd one with a double yolk before, but nothing like this. I have no idea which one of them laid it. It's not a record. *The Guinness Book of Records* says the biggest chicken egg they know of weighed 12oz [340g], but I don't know anyone who's seen anything like it before." *BBC News, 26 April; Sunday Mercury, 27 April 2003.*

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science

This month DAVID HAMBLING looks at how an alternative theory of human evolution has gone from ridicule to respectability

The aquatic ape theory

JEFFREY L ROTMAN / CORBIS

The Aquatic Ape Theory or AAT, which holds that our ancestors were once adapted to a flooded, semi-aquatic habitat, has gone from strength to strength. What started as an idea verging on the ridiculous is now an increasingly respectable theory.

In 1960, Sir Alister Hardy FRS, a noted marine biologist, observed the existence of a 'diving reflex' in humans that conserved their oxygen supply when submerged. He wondered if this might point to an aquatic stage in our evolution. Few took him seriously, and AAT might have vanished without trace if it had not received support from an unexpected quarter.

Elaine Morgan was a television writer who contributed to *Z-Cars* and *Dr Finlay's Casebook*. Her 1972 book, *The Descent Of Woman*, is a feminist classic, and it took up the AAT wholeheartedly. Morgan championed the idea that many of the physical differences between humans and other primates stem from an age, perhaps five to seven million years ago, when pre-humans were adapted to a partially flooded landscape. We did not descend from the trees to walk upright on the plains, but to wade through lakes and seashore. This accounts for the physical differences between humans and other apes.

There are no other naked land mammals; the only naked mammals are those like the dolphin which live in the sea, or mole rats which live underground. Other anatomical features point to an aquatic past. We have a huge amount of fat compared to other mammals; the only other mammals with equivalent fat reserves are those that hibernate – and aquatic ones. Human babies are born fat, unlike other primates. Our subcutaneous fat is attached to the skin rather than to the tissue, unlike apes but like dolphins and seals.

Might this point to an aquatic stage in human evolution?

We have voluntary control of our breathing, and a descended larynx that allows us to breathe easily through mouth as well as nose. The only other mammals which share these features are the sea lion and the dugong.

Another difference which makes more sense in a flooded landscape than a dry savannah is our prolific sweating, and water management generally.

"If ever our early ancestors were savannah-dwellers," commented palæoanthropologist Philip Tobias, "they must have been the most profligate urinators on the savannah."

Although much of *The Descent of Woman* challenged the traditional view of 'man the hunter' as the lead character in human development, it was the AAT which drew the most attention. Morgan's subsequent books have included *The Aquatic Ape* (1982) and *Aquatic Ape Hypothesis* (1999).

Academics tend to dismiss Morgan's ideas out of hand. Professor Adrienne Zihlman of the University of California points out that the AAT has no support from the fossil record. The adaptations that form the basis of the theory are all soft tissues – fat, skin, and cartilage. These leave no fossil traces, so it is impossible to say which of these adaptations already existed before the stage of supposed aquatic apes.

Further, none of the proto-human remains yet discovered shows any signs of the specific adaptations for a species that spent a lot of time in the water. Everything from otters to seals are streamlined with shortened limbs compared to land-going mammals.

But this carries little weight with the believers: "Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence". Lack of fossil evidence may simply mean that the fossils have not been found yet.

Academics also object to the scattergun approach taken by AAT proponents. Various human traits have been cited as evidence of an aquatic past, only to be withdrawn when put under expert scrutiny. It was suggested that human babies can swim naturally, while other primates cannot; this is not true, and no longer forms part of Morgan's case. But if some of the arguments put forward were not valid, that doesn't invalidate the rest of them. The march of the aquatic apes goes on.

There has been plenty of media attention, and Morgan has a growing body of supporters. Sir David Attenborough used his presidency of the British Association for the Advancement of Science to organise a discussion of Morgan's theory. The theory is a favourite among students; Max Planck suggested that ideas only advance when their opponents die out and the new generation accepts them from the beginning, so the AAT may have a bright future.

If regular scientists are reluctant to take on the AAT, then it's down to the irregulars. At least one man is willing to stand firm in the face of the amphibious assault – Jim Moore, a detective of academic arcana. An amateur with the patience for library research, Moore has found that the AAT misses some basic science.

When Hardy made his observation about the diving reflex, he overlooked work which had already shown the reflex existed in animals as diverse as sloths, pigs and armadillos. Later research has shown that other animals, including dogs, can hold their breath at will. Human skin does not resemble that of aquatic mammals, which are either furry like seals or completely naked, like dolphins.

Humans are fat, but this is not an aquatic adaptation: captive monkeys with an abundant food supply end up with a similar amount of fat to humans...and so on.

Moore's position has brought hostility from the AAT camp, which has accused him of making personal attacks on Elaine Morgan. But perhaps the real problem is that the AAT is accepted as an unarguable fact by its believers – who are now demonstrating the very same refusal to accept criticism and new ideas from outsiders that they bemoaned in the scientific establishment 40 years ago.

Jim Moore's AAT site is at http://aquaticape.topcities.com/index.html

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The Daily Mail

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Dr. Robert Beck B.E., D.Sc., has been a consultant to the USN Office of Surface Weaponry and was a Senior Staff Scientist at Eyring Research Institute.
Dr. Beck has been a senior lecturer in the graduate school, University of Southern California. He is the recipient of three international awards for Science and Electromedicine.

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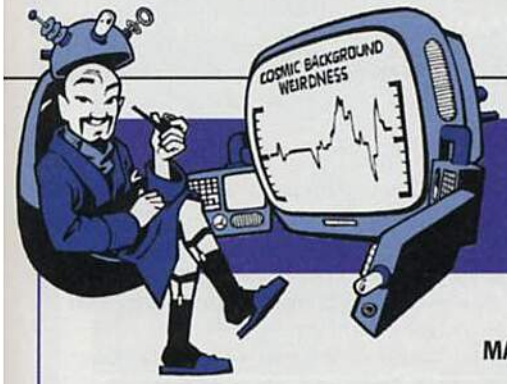


The Hierophant

IN HIS FORTRESS OF ARROGANCE, DEEP BELOW THE HIMALAYAS, THE IMMORTAL ASCENDED MASTER KNOWN AS THE HIEROPHANT TRAVELS THE MORE DISREPUTABLE PATHS OF FORTEANA...

For some years now, pride of place among the Hierophant's collection of mysterious artefacts has gone to a printout of a hitherto unpublished book by Reg Presley with the deceptively mundane title of *Wild Things They Don't Tell Us*. I am pleased to say that this volume has, after about five years in Mr Presley's desk drawer, finally come into print. I do not say this lightly: this is one of the most remarkable books it has ever been my pleasure to read. I can't comment on the published version, but the manuscript contains some quite devastating revelations.

For example, there's his astonishing take on the origins of the Universe: "In the beginning there was a big bang, planets the size of pinheads shoot out in all directions, individually expanding as they go... I have estimated that the Earth is growing approximately 3 inches per year, and at that rate when the earth left the big bang it was 507,456,000 years ago. I also believe that the earth is still expanding and one day soon we shall lose that long beep on the atomic clock and gain an extra one. The bigger the earth is the faster it will spin."

Or consider this meditation on numerology and coincidence: "Winchester, Warminster and Wantage all begin with W's and they are situated in a triangle. [Please ponder that last bit very carefully – H] Here we go again, I thought, triangles, 60 degrees. It was at this point that I changed the W's into numbers. W is the 23rd letter of the alphabet and we have three W's,

Winchester, Warminster and Wantage. 23+23+23=69. 6+9=15. 1+5=6. At this time I was still struggling with coincidences. Was it all just coincidence. Then as if to cement everything into place, to let me know that perhaps I was on the right track in my thinking. Wet Wet Wet covered a song that I had written 28 years ago." This is followed by a detailed exposition of how all the letters of "Wet Wet Wet" break down to "6", and a brief digression to mention that the song came into the charts at number 4 – which, for mystical reasons, in fact means "6". Quite unmissable, I think you'll agree.

You will, I am sure, be familiar with the notion that certain artworks are cursed. The film *Poltergeist* seems to have racked up an impressive death toll; the ballad *Gloomy Sunday* was famously blamed for a spate of suicides in the 1930s; and anybody who has hacked through any Jeffrey Archer novel has done so only at hideous cost to their psyche.

Loren Coleman has now identified a similar – and, it has to be said, immense – 'death cluster' surrounding John Keel's fortean classic *The Mothman Prophecies*. Obviously, this begins with the original bridge collapse at Point Pleasant, which killed 46 people. Then we find a surprising number of people with *Mothman* connections dying – conspiracy theorist and writer Jim Keith; an actor who worked on a *Mothman* film (not the Richard Gere effort) which itself seems to have mysteriously vanished without trace; the publisher of a reprint of the *Prophecies*; director Ted Demme (a former colleague of *Mothman Prophecies* director Mark Pellington); several witnesses or their relatives; a close friend of the band King Black Acid (who provided much of the music for the *Mothman* film's soundtrack CD); a crew member from the film who died when a light aircraft crashed into her apartment building; and a good deal more.

All very eerie, and one can't help but wonder why whoever it is that organises these things couldn't have picked a more deserving target – *Four Weddings And A Funeral*, perhaps.

KONSPIRACY KORNER

ROBIN RAMSAY, EDITOR OF *LOBSTER*, REPORTS FROM THE BUNKER

Whilst filming an interview for yet another TV programme about conspiracy theories, I was asked what was the most ridiculous theory of all. These days, that's an easy one to answer: David Icke's belief that the world's leaders are really shape-shifting, extra-terrestrial lizards wins by a street. Before Icke's reptilian revelation I might have named the claim by the American Lyndon LaRouche and his organisation that the British royal family ran the world's heroin traffic. (In case you were wondering, no, LaRouche and his followers have not a shred of evidence.)

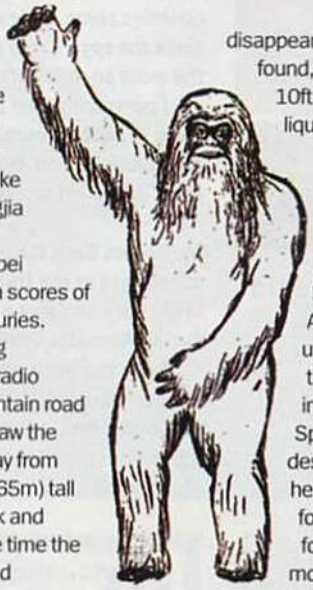
People to whom I have mentioned this generally laugh at the idea; so it obviously seems ridiculous to them. But how ridiculous is it? In a review of the anthology of post-modernist views of conspiracy theory, *Conspiracy Nation* (ed Peter Knight: New York, 2002), Ward Churchill commented: "It may be a stretch to buy LaRouche's contention that good old Queen Liz is the planet's pre-eminent pusher, but then again, Ollie [Colonel Oliver] North did manage to run a pretty hefty cocaine importation enterprise out of the basement of the White House...[and] thoroughly implicated his boss, Ronald Reagan. The idea that a head of state in the 'developed world' might in some sense be engaged in drug trafficking is thus not quite as farfetched as it might seem at first glance." (*Contemporary Sociology* 32, 1, 2002, pp. 65-6)

What seems farfetched or ridiculous is a matter of social construction, and it changes. In 1963 the idea that a section of the national security apparatus of the American state would be involved in importing cocaine into the USA would have seemed far-fetched to all. Twenty years later it was happening. So, we might ask, what seems ridiculous today that, 20 years from now, will turn out to have been actually happening?

One candidate is the idea that SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) is man-made, perhaps a biowarfare organism. A former member of the National Security Agency (NSA), Wayne Madsen, suggests that it is in an essay which opens: "Evidence is mounting that the Bush administration may be engaging in a new form of warfare: bio-economic attacks against countries that either opposed the US war on Iraq or were showing signs of surpassing the US in economic vitality and growth." (http://www.newsinsider.org/madsta/a_product_of_bioeconomic_warfare.html)

Notice the key phrase "may be engaging". Madsen hasn't got the goods yet, but, given what we know about other 'ridiculous' theories, just how far-fetched does this one actually seem?

Yeren urine sample



CHINA'S *YEREN* (WILDMAN) has again been spotted, and this time he may have left a urine sample, according to the official Xinhua News Agency. Six people say they saw the "mythical ape-like animal" on 29 June in Shennongjia Nature Reserve, in the forested mountains of central China's Hubei province, where there have been scores of reported sightings over the centuries.

Five local residents and Shang Zhengmin, a reporter for a local radio station, were in a jeep on a mountain road when they turned a corner and saw the grey creature moving quickly away from the road. It was about 5ft 5in (1.65m) tall with crooked arms, crooked back and shoulder-length black hair. By the time the jeep had stopped, the animal had disappeared. Several 1ft (30cm) footprints were found, along with freshly broken branches and a 10ft (3m)-long "patch of foul-smelling urine-like liquid".

Scientific expeditions to Shennongjia in 1976-77, 1980, 1982 and 1988 searched for evidence of the yeren's existence. Hair samples studied in 1993-94 at the Institute of Vertebrate Palæontology, part of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, indicated an unrecorded primate, closer to humans than to the great apes, although further incontrovertible evidence was lacking. Speculation that the creature could be a descendant of *Gigantopithecus*, a large herbivorous primate, arose after the fossilised *Gigantopithecus* teeth were found in the area. The Shennongjia mountains, after all, are home to all sorts of

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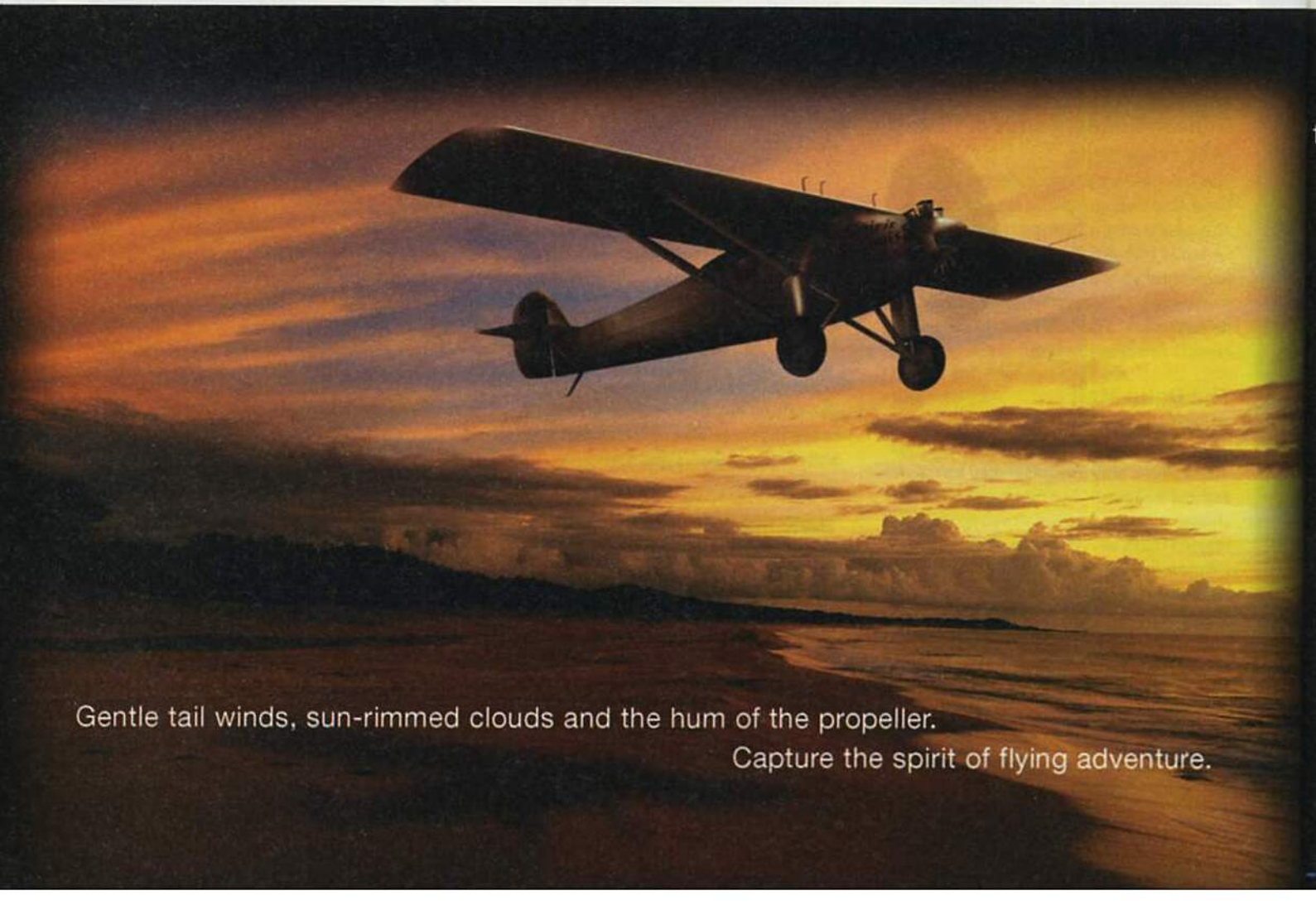
Dr Zhou Guoxing on a "wild man" hunt in Shennongjia province in 1977



"living fossils", plants and animals unique to the region.

A major expedition in 1995 mounted by the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Beijing University failed to find any yeren evidence after hunting for four months, and the 30 scientists involved declared that supposed sightings were the result of misidentifications of monkeys, bears and other creatures. However, many saw this announcement as a means of reducing the flood of visitors to Shennongjia Nature Reserve, which threatened to cause ecological damage. Local tourism officials had offered a sliding scale of rewards for living or dead yeren specimens, photographs, video footage, hair or fæces. In 1997, hundreds of alleged yeren footprints were found in the area.

"I'm firmly of the opinion that the yeren is real," said Dai Min, deputy director of the Committee for Rare and Strange Fauna, who claimed to have had a sighting in September 1993. "Around 20 metres [66ft] away I saw one large and two smaller wildmen. I believe it was a family. They crossed the road and climbed up an incline. They walked upright, their heads were flatter than humans, and they had long arms. They were hairy and had no tails."

This is probably the same sighting as the one made by railway surveyors in the Shennongjia region on 3 September that year. The three yeren were described as being between 5ft 1in (1.56m) and 5ft 7in (1.7m) tall, with long dishevelled red hair, slightly rounded eyes, broad foreheads and protruding chins. Three engineers gave chase, coming within 90ft (27m) as the creatures fled into dense forest. They gave up when they saw their quarry ploughing through the undergrowth "with superhuman speed and strength". Later investigators found hair samples, 20in (50cm) footprints and droppings, analysis of which suggested the yeren were herbivorous.

Around the same time, a local rumour that the son of a yeren and a shy human mother lived in seclusion in the mountains turned out to have been based solely on a videotape of a naked microcephalic man (a "pinhead") eating a banana. **[FT31:2-5, 74:48, 79:16, 83:18, 102:7]**; *Helsingin Sanomat (Finland), 8 Dec 1999; [AP, CNN] Toronto Star, 30 June 2003. See also "Wild Man: China's Yeti" (incorporating three texts translated from the Chinese), Fortean Times Occasional Paper No.1 (1981), edited by Steve Moore.*

C'EST LA GUERRE

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Twenty-three skidoo

The Number of the Becks has a curious history in the realms of sport, conspiracy and coincidence

On 2 July, the celebrated footballer David Beckham was presented with the No 23 shirt that he will wear with his new team, Real Madrid. He wore a No 7 shirt while playing for Manchester United and England, but that number is already worn by Raul, Real Madrid's home-grown striker.

The number 23 rose to prominence in world sport with the iconic basketball player Michael Jordan, who wore the number during his greatest years with the Chicago Bulls and later with the Washington Wizards. Beckham may well have been thinking of Jordan when choosing his new number, although his experience of the No 23 shirt in Spain has been short and painful. In a Champions League fixture in April 2002, Deportivo La Coruna's Argentinian midfielder, Aldo Duscher, who was wearing No 23, launched a tackle that broke a bone in Beckham's foot, briefly threatening his participation in the World Cup.

Manchester City retired their No 23 shirt following the death on 26 June of its most recent holder, the Cameroonian midfielder Marc-Vivien Foé on loan to them for a season. Half an hour before his fatal heart attack on a pitch in Lyon (wearing a No 17 shirt), the 28-year-old told his fellow players: "Boys, even if it means dying on the pitch, we have to win this semi-final." In the event, he did – and they did. Cameroon made it to the final, beating Colombia 1-0.

The day before Beckham received his No 23 shirt, Hong Kong saw about half a million people demonstrating against the imminent passage through the Legislative Council of laws to outlaw treason, secession, sedition and subversion. The Hong Kong government said it was obliged to pass these under Article 23 of Beijing's Basic Law for the Special Administrative Region (SAR).

PAUL BOMMER

Critics rightly feared they could undermine freedoms enjoyed since sovereignty reverted to China in 1997. On 6 July, Hong Kong's chief executive bowed to pressure and agreed to delay the legislation.

The apparently rum significance of the number 23 was brought home to the writer William Burroughs in 1960 while he was living in Tangier. A certain Captain Clark whom he knew boasted that he had been sailing 23 years without an accident. Later that same day, Clark's ship had an accident that killed him and everybody else aboard. While Burroughs was thinking about this crude example of the irony of the gods, a radio bulletin announced the crash of an airliner in Florida. The pilot was another Captain Clark and the flight was Flight 23. The writer Robert Anton Wilson began collecting 23s in 1965, and incorporated a great many in his hilarious conspiracy faction trilogy, *Illuminatus!*, written with Robert Shea in 1969-71. Wilson wrote about the significance of 23 in *Fortean Times* in 1977 [**FT23:32**].

The significance of the number 23 was brought home to William Burroughs while living in Tangier

Once you start looking, 23s are everywhere. A man and a woman contribute 23 chromosomes each to a fœtus. A full turn of the DNA helix occurs every 23 angstroms. There are 23 vertebræ in the human body. Euclid's geometry begins with 23 axioms. At present, the Earth tilts at just over 23 degrees. The Turin Shroud is kept at 23 degrees. The mysterious explosion at Tunguska in Siberia in 1908 was measured as 10^{23} ergs. Yuri Gargarin, (officially) the first man in space, ejected from his spacecraft at 23,000ft and 23 days later Alan Shepard, who was born in 1923, became the first American in space. And so on ad nauseam.

Twenty-three has many negative and sinister connotations. It means "bust" or "break the line" in telegraphers' code. Hexagram 23 in the *I Ching* means "breaking apart". The 23rd Psalm is standard reading at funerals. Julius Caesar is said to have been stabbed 23 times. Sidney Carton is the 23rd man guillotined in the *Tale of Two Cities* (hence, possibly, the mysterious expression, "23 Skiddoo!"). The murder victim in Vincent Price's first horror movie, *House of Wax*, announces: "Now I'm goin' regular on the 23rd". In the film *Rake's Progress*, Rex Harrison as the rake is found with his old college chum's wife in Room 23. In *Die Hard III*, the train derails in station 23.

Some people are surrounded with doom-laden 23s. The bootlegger "Dutch Schultz" (Arthur Flegenheimer) had Vincent "Mad Dog" Coll assassinated on 23rd Street in New York when Coll was 23 years old. Schultz himself was assassinated on 23 October by Charlie Workman. Workman served 23 years of a life sentence before being paroled. John Dillinger was shot at 2323 Clark Street, Chicago.

In 1981, **FT** co-editor Paul Sieveking kept a log of 23s until he succumbed to data overload. If you look out for 23 in the press for a week, you'll soon see why. The number of felons and victims aged 23 is quite phenomenal. Anticipating the objection that researchers usually find data to confirm their preconceptions, he logged 18 as a control number; 23 won hands down.

Irish Independent, 28 June; D.Telegraph, 2+3+7 July; Guardian, 3 July 2003.

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archæology

NEIL MORTIMER asks why Britain's Stone Age artists failed to leave their mark and if the ancient Chinese used writing.

First words and prehistoric pets

WHERE HAS ALL THE PALÆOLITHIC ROCK ART GONE?

One of the enduring mysteries of British archæology has been the complete absence of palæolithic cave art from the country's archæological record, so the discovery of 12,000-year-old rock carvings on the walls of Creswell Crags, Derbyshire, is a cause for some celebration. Rock art researchers Paul Bahn, Paul Pettitt and Sergio Ripoll identified the engravings of two birds and an ibex at a site called Church Hole, where a 12,000-year-old bone needle was discovered in the 19th century. The rock art panels are caked in calcite, ruling out the possibility that they are modern forgeries, and are obscured by graffiti dating to 1948.

SERGIO RIPOLL

Of the two carved birds, one appears to be a crane or swan, and the other a bird of prey. The largest engraving is of an ibex, an animal not thought to have been indigenous to Britain, and researchers are speculating that the rock art records a rare sighting of a beast which had strayed across the land bridge that linked the British Isles to the continent at the time. The discovery is sure to prompt renewed searches for further examples of British palæolithic rock art. *Observer, 15 June 2003.*

GALLERY IN STONE: Rock carving at Creswell Crags appears to show the outline of two birds.

BROKEN, FARTED

A gigantic 1200-year-old fossilised Viking turd, measuring 8in x 2in (20cm x 5cm), discovered in 1972 and exhibited at the Archæological Resource Centre (ARC) in York, was accidentally broken into three pieces during a recent school visit. The mighty human stool is being restored to its former condition by Gill Snape, a student at the University of Bradford, and it will be mounted on perspex for visitors to 'fully appreciate its glory as the centrepiece of the ARC'. "It's rock hard, it doesn't smell and it's certainly not squishy," said Ms Snape. "The kids loved it. We've even had letters saying 'thank you for showing us the poo'. It's huge – and bear in mind it's shrunk since it was deposited." *BBC News, 6 June 2003.*

PREHISTORIC POOCHES

Russian archæologists have found what is thought to be the earliest evidence for the domestication of dogs. Two dog skulls dating from about 13-17,000 years ago were excavated at the Upper Palæolithic site of Eliseyevichi I in the Bryansk region of Russia. The dogs would have looked like large huskies, and their skulls were quite distinct from those of wolves. Unfortunately for the two dogs, they appear to have been eaten by their human masters. *British Archaeology, July 2003.*

EARLY WORDS

A controversial discovery in China may have uncovered evidence of the earliest written words. Written on tortoise shells and deposited as grave goods alongside Neolithic burials, the finds were made by researchers from the University of Science and Technology of China, in Anhui province, and Brookhaven National Laboratory in the USA. The site of the discovery has been radiocarbon-dated to between 6,600 and 6,200 BC, two or perhaps three thousand years earlier than what is generally considered to be the earliest true writing, found on Sumerian clay tablets from Uruk, Iraq. The archæologists say the tortoise shell inscriptions, of 11 strongly stylised symbols, bear similarities to written characters used thousands of years later during the Shang dynasty, which lasted from 1,700-1,100 BC. Professor David Keightly, of the University of California, Berkeley, urged caution over the finds: "It's a puzzle and an anomaly; [the symbols] are remarkably early. We can't call it writing until we have more evidence." *BBC News, 17 April 2003.*

THE FIRST CASUALTY

News that 170,000 artefacts had been looted from Baghdad Museum in April during the chaotic aftermath of the Iraq war was greeted with outrage and dismay, and US forces were heavily criticised for not protecting Iraqi institutions such as the museum from looters. It was alleged that the missing artefacts' value would have run into billions of pounds, and that they represented "a tremendous loss to world literature and knowledge". With anti-US feelings running high around the world, the devastation of Baghdad Museum was seized upon as symbolic of America's arrogance and the folly of the invasion of Iraq. A month later came reports that the number of missing artefacts had been overestimated, and the figure was put at 3,000 items. In June a vast number of artefacts were discovered in storage hidden in vaults under the Museum and at the Iraqi Central Bank, which slashed the number of missing items to just 47 pieces. In a final twist to this odd tale, 130 of Baghdad Museum's 185 employees staged a revolt against the institution's directors later in June, claiming that the theft of the 47 artefacts was an inside job. *Observer, 13 April; BBC News, 7 June; Guardian, 17 June 2003.*

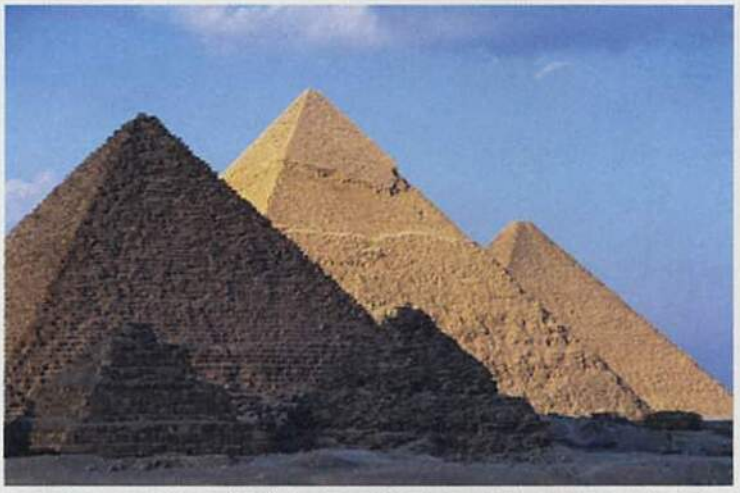
Not Pleased To Meteor

Could ancient civilisations have fallen and religions have risen because of meteorite impacts?

In 2001, a meteoric impact crater was spotted on satellite images of the Al 'Amarah region of southern Iraq, about 10 miles (16km) north-west of the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates and home of the Marsh Arabs. Geologist Sharad Master, who identified the crater, said that the sediments in this region are very young, so the impact must have happened in the last 6,000 years.

The crater lies on what would have been shallow sea 4,000 years ago, and any impact would have caused devastating fires and flooding. This could explain why so many early cultures went into sudden decline around 2300 BC. They include the demise of the Akkad culture of central Iraq, with its semi-mythological emperor Sargon; the end of the fifth dynasty of Egypt's Old Kingdom, following the building of the Great Pyramid, and the sudden disappearance of hundreds of early settlements in the Holy Land. The impact might also throw light on the Epic of Gilgamesh, which talks of "the Seven Judges of Hell", who raised their torches, lighting the land with flame, and a storm that turned day into night, "smashed the land like a cup", and flooded the area. All this will remain speculative until the crater is dated. ***Sunday Telegraph, 4 Nov 2001.***

In 1999, a young Swedish geologist called Jens Ormo identified another impact crater larger than a football field in Italy's Serente-Velino Regional Park in the Apennine mountains, 60 miles (96km) east of Rome. He made the discovery when he came across a roughly circular seasonal lake, 115 by 140 metres (380ft by 460ft), with a pronounced raised rim and no inlet or outlet. The soil's magnetic signature indicated the presence of fragments of an iron or stoney-iron meteorite. From the crater size, Ormo estimates that the impact had an explosive force of a kiloton of TNT. It would have looked like a nuclear blast, with shockwaves, earthquakes and a mushroom cloud.



CORBIS / TIBOR BOGNAR

STRUCK OUT: Egypt's Old Kingdom – brought low by a cosmic collision?

At least 24 meteorites pelted Illionois

Soil samples have been dated to AD 412, plus or minus 40 years. The legend of a falling star has been around in the Apennines since Roman times. Some have equated this with the celestial vision which converted the Emperor Constantine to Christianity in AD 312 – that date is not ruled out for the impact, since even small amounts of contamination with recent material could have produced a later date.

According to the historian Eusebius, Constantine "saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the Sun, and bearing the inscription 'conquer by this'. At this sight he himself was struck with amazement, and his whole army also, which followed him on this expedition, and witnessed the miracle." This occurred just before a decisive battle for control of Rome and the empire, and Constantine attributed his subsequent victory to divine help from a Christian God. He subsequently ordered that persecution of Christians cease and their religion receive official status. *Meteoritics and Planetary Science, v.37, p.150; Guardian, 6 Feb; New Scientist, 21 June; BBC News, 23 June 2003.*

The force of the meteorite that hit eastern Siberia on 25 September 2002 destroyed 40 square miles (104 sq km) of forest and caused earth tremors felt 60 miles (97km) away. Because of bad weather and difficult terrain, it wasn't until May 2003 that an expedition from Russia's Kosmopoisk Institute reached the impact site in a remote area north of Lake Beikal, 700 miles (1,130km) north of Irkutsk. Fragments of the meteorite had apparently exploded into shrapnel 18 miles (29km) above the Earth with the force of at least 200 tonnes of TNT. At the time, Russian media reported that villagers 60 miles (97km) away had witnessed a gigantic fireball screeching down from the sky, causing windows to rattle and house lights to swing as they were hit by blast waves. There were no reported casualties. *Times, 7 June; D.Mirror, 21 June 2003.*

On 26 March, a hail of at least 24 meteorites pelted Illinois, poking holes in rooftops and bouncing around inside houses in the Chicago area. The meteor flashed across the sky as it burst apart about 11.50pm, and was seen from Wisconsin to Ohio. One 5lb (2.3kg) fragment of what had been a rock estimated to have been the size of a small car narrowly missed Noe Garza of Park Forest, punching a softball-size hole in his roof and crashing at the spot where he had been standing only minutes earlier. Roofs of houses in Matteson and Olympia Fields were also damaged. As in Siberia, there were no reported casualties. ***Chicago Tribune, 28 Mar 2003.***

On 6 June 2002, an asteroid, estimated to be between 15ft (4.5m) and 30ft (9m) wide, disintegrated over the Mediterranean with an explosive detonation comparable to the Hiroshima atomic bomb, approximately 14 kilotons. Similar NEO (Near Earth Object) explosions happen about 30 times a year. Brig Gen Simon P Worden, deputy director of the US Strategic Command, told a House of Representatives science subcommittee on 3 October 2002 that had the June detonation taken place over the Indian subcontinent, it could have sparked disaster. "Imagine that the bright flash accompanied by a damaging shockwave had occurred over India and Pakistan," he said. "To our knowledge, neither of these nations had the sophisticated sensors that can determine the difference between a natural NEO impact and a nuclear detonation. The resulting panic in the nuclear-armed and hair-triggered opposing forces could have been the spark that ignited a nuclear horror we have avoided for over half a century."

The US Air Force's early warning satellites in 1996 detected an asteroid burst over Greenland that released energy equal to about 100 kilotons of TNT. Comparable explosions are thought to have occurred in 1908 over Tunguska in Siberia, over the Amazon basin in the 1930s and over Central Asia in the 1940s. *Lewiston (ME) Sun Journal, 4 Oct; Jane's Intelligence Report, 17 Oct 2002.*

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4794	Taio / How Soon Is Now
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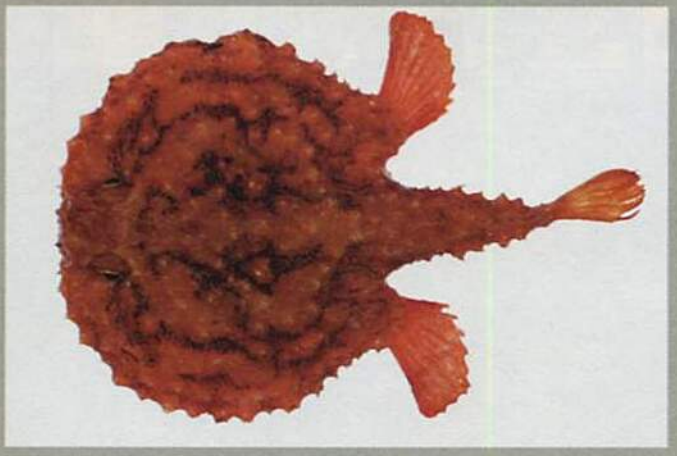
alien zoo

DR KARL SHUKER reels in a prize catch of finny tales, including a genetically engineered glowing fish, an eel-like newcomer and a staggering undersea photographic survey

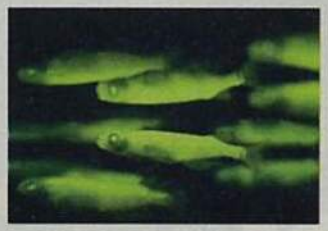
Armoured shrimps, prickly sharks and others...

ALL THREE PICTURES: NORFANZ VOYAGE / NATIONAL OCEANS OFFICE



– add to those aforementioned marine novelties some gelatinous sea cucumbers, sea spiders the size of dinner plates, and several new species of blue ray, and you have just a very select sample of the 1,800+ species of fishes and invertebrates recorded and photographed during a month-long marine expedition in May-June aboard *Tangaroa* – the research vessel of New Zealand's National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA). Surveying the deep waters around Lord Howe Island and Norfolk Island down to 2km (1.2 miles), the team found that out of their vast haul of species, more than 100 of the fishes were new to science, and up to 300 of the invertebrates were too. *http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,2534982a11,00.html 10 June; http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/s884828.htm 20 June 2003.*

Green glow the fishes-o!



PA PHOTOS / EPA

'Made in Taiwan' is a common sight on a wide range of flashy goods, but few are flashier than the so-called night pearls currently attracting great interest in Taipei aquarium shops. For this is the name given to a bizarre new strain of zebra fish whose representatives, unlike their traditional counterparts, glow an eerie green in the dark. The reason for this is simple, as hinted at by their popular local nickname – Frankenfish. They are not born out of Nature, but rather created by genetic engineering at the Taipei-based Taikong Corporation, where DNA from glowing jellyfish has been introduced into normal zebra fish, producing this weird glowing variety, the night pearl – or, as the corporation refers to it, the TK-1. By August of this year, production of night pearls by the corporation is expected to stabilise at over 100,000 per month, and a red-glow variety (the TK-2) is planned for sale by next year. But don't think that you will be able to breed them yourself – they have been engineered so as not to produce offspring. *http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=516&ncid=757&e=10&u=/ap/200307 8 July 2003.*

An eel of a discovery

New species, and even new genera, of fishes are still described quite frequently by zoologists, but the creation of an entirely new taxonomic family to house a new fish is a far, far rarer occurrence. Yet it may be happening soon, thanks to a peculiar eel-like fish discovered in 1999 by researcher Ilse Walker. Working with Brazil's National Amazon Research Institute (INPA) in flood plains near Manaus, she came upon an unfamiliar long-bodied 15cm (6in) fish that was later found to combine characteristics from a range of quite separate fish groups.

Among its most notable features are its full set of fins (unlike true eels), a tail resembling that of the huge freshwater arapaima (pirarucu), and up to 10 air chambers (instead of the usual 2-3 in other fishes, used for maintaining their position underwater). This latter feature has incited researchers to speculate that their still-undescribed 'mystery fish' (as they call it) may breathe at the water surface. They plan to describe and officially name this dramatically different species by the end of 2003. *http://stacks.msnbc.com/news/934600.asp 3 July 2003.*

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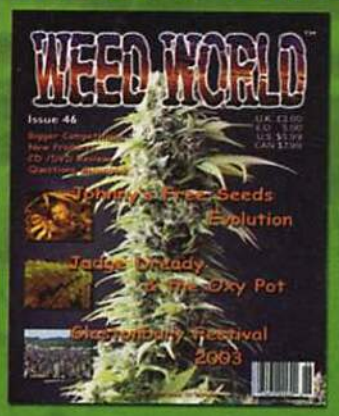

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Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

63. THE END OF INVENTION

HUNT EMERSON

The myth

In 1899, Charles H Duell, Director (or Commissioner) of the US Patent Office (or it might have been Commissioner Henry Ellsworth in 1843), told Congress that "Everything that can be invented has been invented", and promptly resigned his office.

The "truth"

Neither gentleman – nor any other Patent Office official – ever said any such thing. Ellsworth did report to Congress that "the advancement of the arts, from year to year, taxes our credulity and seems to presage the arrival of that period when human improvement must end." However, in context, it's clear that he used this phrase only to dramatise the extraordinary increase in patents that he had witnessed; indeed, he went on to suggest areas in which he expected to see further growth. Attributions of the remark to Duell, by contrast, seem to be entirely baseless. The story has been debunked a number of times – by *The Journal of the Patent Office Society* in 1940, for instance, and by *The Skeptical Inquirer* in 1989 – but it lives on, and can even be found in dictionaries of quotations.

Sources *The Great Idea Finder* at www.ideafinder.com/resource/archives/wow-duell.htm, and *The Quote... Unquote Newsletter*, Vol.12, No.2, April 2003.

Disclaimer This is of course the quintessential example of the comically poor prediction, and as such unlikely ever to lose its appeal. Still, if you're able to prove that it's patently true, please lodge the appropriate schemata with FT's letters page.

Mythchaser

HUNT EMERSON

It's well known (to American Internet users, at least) that there is in Cornwall a churchyard where plague victims are buried, and where nothing will now grow except butterbur. Whereabouts in Cornwall? And why butterbur? And has anyone tried rhubarb?

REMOTE CONTROL: The aftermath of the mad chase through the pedestri

Stockholm bers

On 19 May, a 32-year-old man armed with an iron bar attacked pedestrians, cyclists and cars at Åkeshov underground station in Stockholm. One man was killed and six other people wounded, three of them seriously. The lives of a 12-year-old girl and a young nurse were saved by their cycling helmets. The trial started on 1 July. The accused explained that he had believed for a long time that trolls were pursuing him. He thought his own brother had been replaced by a troll. At the time of the attacks, he thought he was acting in self-defence as the trolls were closing in on him. His obsession with trolls apparently began after reading a thriller by Dean R Koontz.

On 31 May, a 50-year-old Iranian street hawker of small mechanical toys drove into a pedestrian precinct in Stockholm, where he tried to run down as many people as possible before crashing into a shop front. Two people were killed and about 20 injured. After his arrest, the driver calmly told police he had done everything in his power to stop his car chasing pedestrians. "Someone else was steering my car by remote control, I just couldn't stop it," he said. He explained that for a long time he had been shadowed and persecuted by a covert organisation, which he suspected was SÄPO (the Swedish security police). Seconds before he lost control of his car, he noticed his

REUTERS / SCANPIX

precinct in Stockholm

erkers

chief persecutor standing on the pavement and turning towards him, holding an object that looked like a mobile phone but was "obviously" a remote control device. The car then steered by itself into the pedestrian precinct where it began its mad chase. He was very sorry for what happened, but he was a helpless onlooker trapped in the car listening to the thuds and cries when people were hit. He denied that he was insane, but admitted that appearances might be against him. However, according to the police, the man had a history of mental problems. *Expressen (Sweden), 1+3 June, 1 July; Kvällsposten (Sweden), 3 July 2003.*

Strange deaths

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THE MORTAL COIL

INDIAN TWIN SISTERS BORN IN NAGDA village in Madhya Pradesh 114 years ago both died on 29 May 2003 and were subsequently cremated side by side. Kali Bi Sheikh and Batul Bi Sheikh were born to Umdabai and Sultan in the village of Siya. They were married into two different families from Nagda on the same day and turned widows simultaneously. After their husbands died, they lived together. They had about 125 grandchildren and great grandchildren between them. Kali Bi fell ill and died while being taken to hospital. At roughly the same time, Batul Bi, who was sleeping at home, also breathed her last. *sify.com, Ananova, 1 June 2003.*

FIREDANCER*, A FILM ABOUT AN AFGHAN refugee navigating western culture in America, was first screened in May at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York. It was the first film from Afghanistan ever to be considered for an Academy Award nomination. However, its impact on critics was eclipsed by *grand guignol* when Nathan Powell, the film's producer, pleaded guilty to beheading Jawed Wassel, the Afghan who directed it, and stuffing his severed head in a freezer. The murder appears to have been sparked by a business disagreement in Powell's Queens apartment on 3 October 2001; why the case has only now come to trial is not explained. *Independent on Sunday, 8 June 2003.

TERRY COLON

A MAN AGED ABOUT 50 WAS FOUND DEAD in his seat at a cinema in New Delhi on 24 June after the late-night screening of Bollywood's latest horror film, *Bhoot* ('Ghost'), which the director had warned could pose a health risk to those of a nervous disposition. It is a thriller about a possessed housewife, set in a high-rise Mumbai (Bombay) apartment. The dead man, discovered by the cinema's cleaning staff, had no identification papers or external injuries. "No one has come forward to claim the body," said a police official. "Maybe he got frightened, I don't know." *[R] 25 June 2003.*

AN UNNAMED MAN FOUND A DECOMPOSING body occupying his bed when he returned home to Norwich after visiting relatives for several days. The man lived alone and was not expecting anyone to be in his flat. There was no sign of a forced entry. The body was so decomposed that the police were unable to identify it. *Ananova, 5 June 2003.*

A MAN'S BODY WAS RECOVERED FROM A tree last January, a year after it was first spotted by a passer-by who decided not to report it because he was wanted by the police. The body was partially hidden by leaves 40ft (12m) up the tree in Olympia, Washington State. When the passer-by returned to the area, he saw that the body was still there and called police. One detective was a tree-trimmer in his spare time and used his equipment to cut away the branches and lower the body. "Right now, we just don't know a whole lot," said Thurston Deputy Coroner Terry Harper. "We just know it was a heck of a time getting him down." *Ananova, 30 Jan 2003.*

TWO CAUCASIAN MEN IN THEIR THIRTIES dropped from the undercarriage of an Air France Boeing 777 as it approached Pudong International Airport in Shanghai on 24 January after a flight from Paris. One of the men smashed through the roof of a house, leaving a large gash in the roof. The men, who showed signs of frostbite, had probably frozen to death in the wheel wells of the aircraft during the 11-hour journey, dropping from the sky when the landing gear was deployed. Neither carried identification. Stowaways falling from aircraft wheel wells are usually escaping from developing countries and trying to reach the West; the Fortean Archives have a dozen examples on file. Sneaking into China from Europe, however, is most unusual. *New York Times, 25 Jan 2003.*

A WOMAN WAS SHOT DEAD BY HER fiancé after she jumped out of the wardrobe to surprise him. Benjamin Kult, 25, thought 21-year-old Pang Yang was a burglar and shot her in the head with his Glock handgun. The couple, from Nebraska, had announced their engagement two days earlier. *Metro, 20 June 2002.*

A BUDDHIST MONK AND TWO NUNS DIED on 29 September 2002 when they filled bath tubs with 60 litres (13 gallons) of petrol, sat in them and set them alight at the Wat Thmar Sar pagoda in Cambodia's eastern province of Prey Veng. They left suicide notes expressing their belief that ritual suicide was the only way to achieve true nirvana. Three other monks who tried to commit suicide by stabbing themselves in the chest were saved by nearby residents. The mother – herself a nun – of the one monk who died was seen kneeling down and worshipping in front of her blazing son, saying "God bless you". Provincial authorities were seeking to arrest a senior monk who led the group in its suicide bid, but failed to go through with the act himself and fled the temple. *[R] 1 Oct 2002.*

Himmler's crusade

(BK) 135/KA/01/051

What was a group of SS scientists doing in Tibet on the eve of the Second World War? CHRISTOPHER HALE reveals the true story of the 1938 expedition to discover the origins of the 'Aryan Master Race'.

On 22 December 1938, five heavily bearded officers of Heinrich Himmler's SS, by now barely distinguishable one from the other, panted hard in the thin cold air as they pulled their small Tibetan ponies up the zigzagging trail towards the Natu La Pass that lay somewhere in the swirling clouds above them. For centuries, this had been the traditional route from India, across the mighty Himalayas to the forbidden land of Tibet. Strung out behind the expedition leader, SS *Hauptsturmführer* and zoologist Ernst Schäfer, were servants, porters and a caravan of yaks and ponies, piled high with boxes custom-made in Berlin. It was wet and misty, with a light snow fall. The trail was steep and strewn with icy boulders, and even their sure-footed animals slipped. There was a tense encounter with a wool caravan coming down from the summit and heading for the great wool market at Kalimpong. Schäfer's men roughly pushed the other caravan out of the way and a donkey plunged down to the rocks beneath.

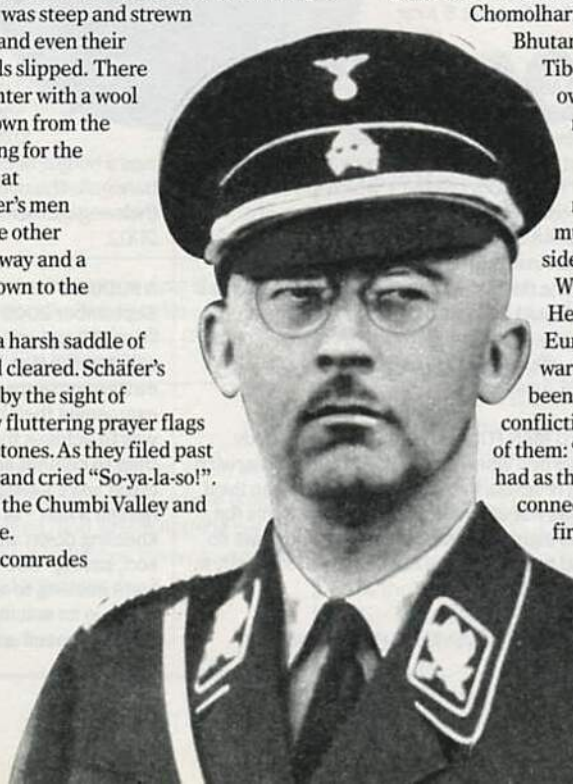
At the summit, a harsh saddle of stone, the mist had cleared. Schäfer's men were greeted by the sight of hundreds of wildly fluttering prayer flags and a big cairn of stones. As they filed past they added stones and cried "So-ya-la-so!". Ahead of them lay the Chumbi Valley and the road to Gyantse.

Schäfer and his comrades

At last Schäfer gazed down into Tibet

stood in silence gazing down into Tibet, awe-struck and hungry for conquest. In front of them, they could see a great cathedral of snow – the soaring spire of Mt Chomolhari, the Mountain of the Goddess, Bhutan's westernmost peak on the edge of Tibet. Chomolhari would now preside over their journey replacing the mountain gods of Kangchendzonga. They saw lakes covered with ice and heard the deep roar of the river in the valley far below. Men, mules and yaks set off down the other side – into Tibet.

What were SS scientists sponsored by Heinrich Himmler doing in Tibet as Europe edged towards the precipice of war? Many different explanations have been offered over the years, and scores of conflicting stories told. Here are just some of them: "The German expeditions to Tibet had as their mission the discovery of a connection between lost Atlantis and the first civilisation of Central Asia"; "Schäfer believed that Tibet



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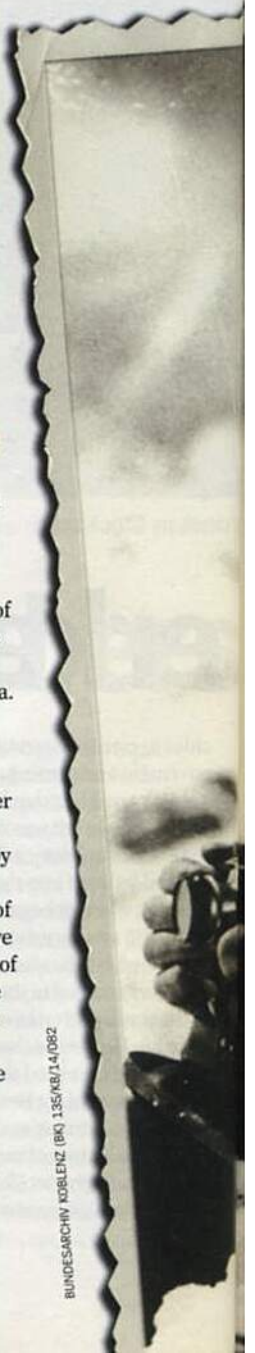
RIGHT: Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler



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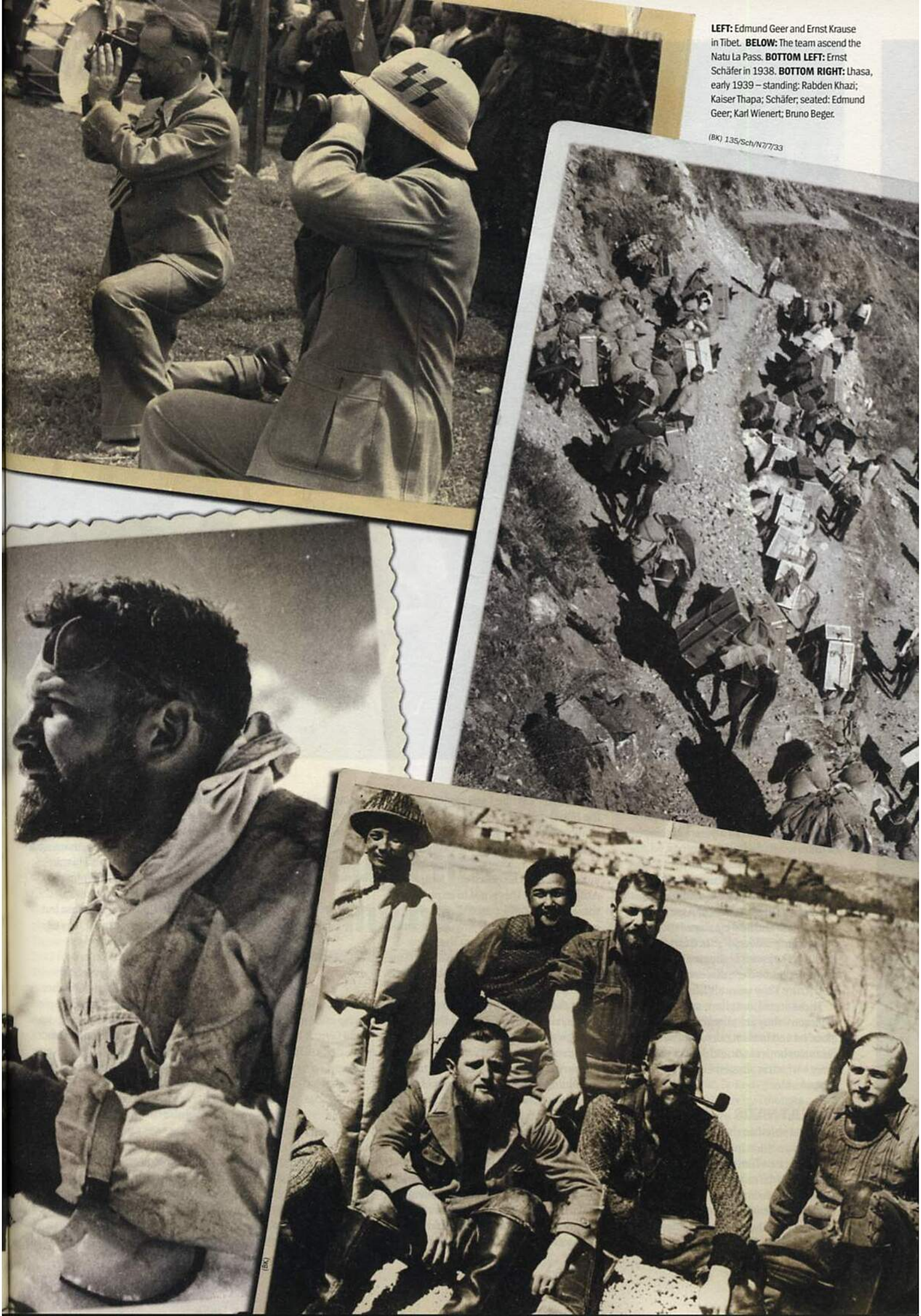

LEFT: Edmund Geer and Ernst Krause in Tibet. **BELOW:** The team ascend the Natu La Pass. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Ernst Schäfer in 1938. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Lhasa, early 1939 – standing: Rabden Khazi; Kaiser Thapa; Schäfer; seated: Edmund Geer; Karl Wienert; Bruno Beger.

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was the cradle of mankind, the refuge of an 'Aryan root race', where a caste of priests had created a mysterious empire of knowledge, called Shambhala, adorned with the Buddhist wheel of life, the swastika"; "The SS men were magicians, who had forged alliances with the mystic Tibetan cities of Agarthi and Shambhala and had mastered the forces of the living universe"; "In the ruins of Berlin, a thousand bodies with no identity papers were discovered by the Red Army. They were all Tibetans."

These statements have one thing in common – they are all untrue. But like a clouded and broken mirror, these fantasies both mask and reflect the true story – which is altogether more remarkable.

OCCULT NAZIS

I had stumbled on the story of the SS Tibet Expedition in 1999. I was making a now notorious film for the BBC's science strand *Horizon* examining the myth of Atlantis. We focused on the ideas of Graham Hancock and he was not too pleased with the results as readers of *Fortean Times* probably know – but that's another story. While I was researching the *Horizon* film, I was struck by the similarities between ideas that had fired the imagination of Heinrich Himmler and the ones I was coming across in authors such as Hancock and John Anthony West. This is not to imply that these authors hold extreme right wing opinions or in any way sympathise with such obnoxious beliefs, but there are troubling overlaps. There's a fascination, in the first place, with a lost and highly accomplished culture that flourished many thousands of years before the great civilisations of the Middle East. For Himmler and his coterie, this lost culture had given rise to the Aryan race – whose mastery Himmler was dedicated to upholding. In modern examples of such speculation, we find a superior priestly caste that survived a post-Ice Age catastrophe and spread its wisdom to the rest of the world. This basic model of historical development is certainly common to Himmler and to many modern writers and is highly malleable. It can be applied to Atlantis, it can simply refer to some nameless, lost civilisation or, in the writings of Erich von Däniken and others, it has been replaced by aliens from a highly advanced culture elsewhere in the Universe who arrive on Earth, mate with its 'primitive' inhabitants and inspire them to build pyramids. In Hancock's *Fingerprints of the Gods*, for example, which closely follows von Däniken but ditches the spaceships, the extraterrestrials are replaced by 'bearded white strangers' who do essentially the same thing, namely spreading civilisation. There are other areas of common ground – for example, a peculiar fascination with ancient astronomy and the constellation Orion – but the most important bridge between these disparate parties was always that alluring idea of a lost civilisation, an ancient repository of wisdom and high-minded elitism. For Himmler, this lost Aryan culture was a pure-blooded one – this racial purity was the fundamental source of Aryan power and achievement. In the 20th century, though, Aryans had become, according to Himmler, less pure and less powerful – and this ideahad murderous consequences.

Many writers have become fascinated

ABOVE: Members of the team host a tea party for Tibetan dignitaries in Lhasa. Schäfer can be seen at the head of the table.

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The SS tramped through Tibet waving banners

by Nazi interest in the occult – it has even been suggested that Adolf Hitler possessed occult powers. Much of this literature is, of course, nonsense: but it was in a Discovery Channel film about Nazis and the occult that I first saw flickering black and white footage of Germans tramping about the high plateau of Tibet and waving SS banners. These were extracts, I discovered, from a 1942 film called *Geheimnis Tibet* (Secret Tibet) that had been made by the German Tibet Expedition. It was not easy to find out very much more. The expedition had, it seemed, been sent to Tibet by Himmler – and, it was suggested, might have been looking for Atlantis. All the members of the expedition were SS officers – and one of them, according to rumour, was still alive. I knew of a number of television producers and researchers who had tried to track down this mysterious man. His name was Bruno Beger, and he had been the expedition's anthropologist. In 1971 he gained some notoriety when he was accused of murdering more than 100 prisoners at Auschwitz.

When the BBC transmitted our film *Atlantis Reborn*, all hell broke loose. Graham Hancock and his colleague Robert Bauval launched complaints to the BBC and then the Broadcasting Standards Commission.

This proved to be a complex, long drawn-out and rather acrimonious procedure that took more than nine months to complete. In the meantime, I decided to find out more about these mysterious SS men who had gone to Tibet and had reached the forbidden city of Lhasa. Who were they and what were they doing there? Just who was Ernst Schäfer? And what made his Nazi heart tick?

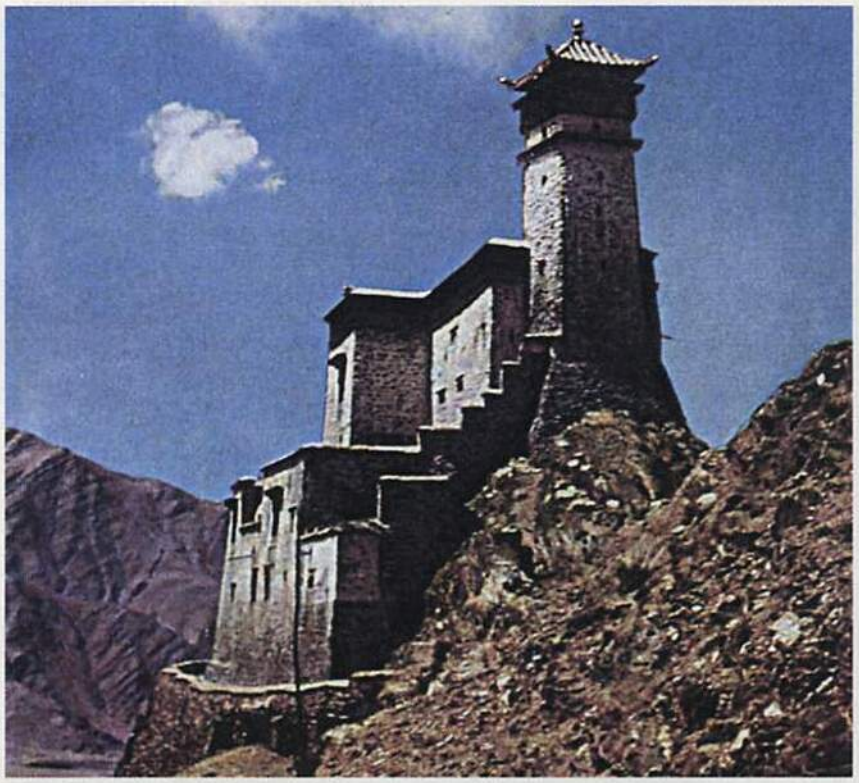
TOP: Ernst Schäfer and Ernst Krause at work on *Geheimnis Tibet* (Secret Tibet) (1942).
ABOVE: Bruno Beger being blessed by the Regent in Tibet.

IN SEARCH OF SS HAUPTSTURMFÜHRER ERNST SCHÄFER

Anyone researching the history of Central Asia must turn to a book called *Tournament of Shadows* by Karl Meyer and Shareen Brysac. It is a wonderful treasure trove of stories about the history of the Imperial powers and their centuries-old jockeying for power along the margins of the Himalayas. It has been called the Great Game – and I would discover that the SS expedition was really the last hand played in it.

Meyer and Brysac referred tantalisingly to a file in the India Office in the British Library. It was simply called L/P&S/12/4343: meaning that it was a 'political and secret file'. I would later discover many other treasures in the British Library's extraordinary collections, but this file was the turning point. One rainy day, I walked through the portals of the Library and took the lift to the third floor and the India Office Collection. After a brief skirmish with the cataloguing system, L/P&S/12/4343 was delivered to my desk. It was an electrifying moment, somehow charged with all kinds of possibilities. The thick file was cocooned in brown cardboard and delicately tied with some rather grubby pieces of string. Its secret and 'demi-secret' reports revealed for the first time what an extraordinary story could be told about the SS expedition to Tibet. As I turned the now fragile pages, I began to get a sense of real human beings, pitted against each other in a battle for Lhasa, the Forbidden City. In one report, the expedition leader Schäfer was described as "forceful, volatile, scholarly, vain to the point of childishness, disregardful of social convention or the feelings or the conveniences of others." The writer went on to conclude that Schäfer was a "priest of Nazism." What an intriguing character! It was clear too from the documents that the British Mission officer in Lhasa hated the Germans – and Schäfer especially. As far as I could see, he had resisted any British attempt to appease the Germans and had done his best to undermine Schäfer's reputation in Lhasa. So I had also found some tense human drama here too – a clash of individuals on the roof of the world. I was puzzled by British diplomat Hugh Richardson's boasts that the arrival of the Germans had done his own and Britain's reputation with the Tibetans no end of good. They had, he claimed, made fools of themselves, insulted important politicians and had been reduced to eating raw yak meat in a Lhasa hovel. The implication was clear: we won, they lost. But raw yak meat was considered a delicacy by Tibetans... and hadn't the Germans stayed for three months in Lhasa and managed to visit Tibet's oldest building, the Yumbu Lagang, which had been forbidden to Richardson? Was this upright British diplomat telling the truth, or had the Germans in fact been rather successful in Lhasa?

There were other finds in that bulky



FROM *GEHEIMNIS TIBET*

ABOVE: Tibet's oldest building, the Yumbu Lagang – the British were *verboten*, but not the SS expedition.

file. It seemed that Schäfer had developed a passion for a young Sikkimese man with the unlikely name of Kaiser Thapa and had wanted to take him back to Berlin, where he had acquired a flat for them both to live in. This sounded decidedly queer – or so the British, probably remembering their public schools, inferred. One document alluded to the "dominant Schäfer" and the "gentle" Kaiser. And there were other references to a "tragic accident" – it seemed that Schäfer had shot his wife just before he set off for Tibet.

Next I followed the trail to the US National Archives In Washington, and here I found more treasures in the documents captured by the lorry load at the end of the war and brought to the United States. I immediately unearthed the SS records, complete with application forms, of all the expedition members. Schäfer's was bulging, and full of extraordinary information.

There was a series of letters from 1942 which unfolded a decidedly rum story about Schäfer attacking another passenger in his sleep on the night train from Munich to Berlin: I speculated about the kind of tension and anxiety that could have fuelled such a bizarre example of 'acting out'. Then in the Bundesarchiv in Berlin, I found Himmler's private papers. Here were more revealing insights into Schäfer's odd and complex character. Himmler referred to Schäfer's natural tendency to rebel and admonished him for jumping the gun with some hare-brained military scheme – of which more later. In another part of the Bundesarchiv, I found scores of files from Schäfer's own 'Sven Hedin Institute' which he had set up during the war in an abandoned castle in the foothills of the Austrian Alps.

The picture of Schäfer that was slowly emerging from this Himalaya of documents was a surprising one; the character of this Nazi Indiana Jones began to seem as complex as some tragic Shakespearean hero. Schäfer's family was wealthy and from an early age, young Ernst was able to indulge his passion for zoology and hunting. This was not an unusual combination before our animal rights-conscious times, but Schäfer made hunting a personal cult. It would bring him glory in the Third Reich – after all Himmler and Herman Goering were also passionate hunters. For Schäfer, it would also bring personal tragedy, just months before he left for Tibet.

In 1930, when he was just 19, Schäfer met the American adventurer Brooke Dolan. Together they organised two remarkable expeditions to Central Asia in search of rare animals, and of course excitement. They blasted their way from Shanghai, up the Yangtze and into the war-torn borderland between Tibet and China. In Amdo and Kham, a remote mountainous world from which flowed the great rivers of Asia like the Salween and the Mekong, was a stunning wonderland of obscure flora and fauna which Schäfer and Dolan would bring back to their museums shot and stuffed. These were great opportunites for Schäfer, and when he returned to Germany he was determined to turn himself into a hero. He began publishing books – heavy on adventure and light on science with titles like *Mountains, Buddhas and Bears* and *Unknown Tibet*. And, like so many other ambitious young men in the early 1930s, he joined Himmler's SS. The SS was, amongst other things, an elite intellectual club and offered advancement to those frustrated by Germany's frozen system of academic promotion.

The second Dolan-Schäfer expedition had come close to disaster and Dolan had abandoned Schäfer in the wilderness. The German never forgave his American friend and although he returned with Dolan to the Academy of Sciences in Philadelphia in 1936, it was not long before he began

HEINRICH HIMM

His eyes," recalled his Swedish masseur Felix Kersten, "were extraordinarily small, and the distance between them narrow, rodent like. If you spoke to him, those eyes would never leave your face; they would rove over your countenance, fix your eyes; and in them would be an expression of waiting, watching, stealth... His ways were the orphidian ways of the coward, weak, insincere and immeasurably cruel... Himmler's mind was not a 20th century mind. His character was mediæval, feudalistic, machiavellian, evil."

Heinrich Himmler was the patron of Ernst Schäfer's third mission to Tibet and Schäfer would be his troublesome favourite until 1945. Schäfer's exploits would have been unimaginable without his patronage and support. After September 1939, all the men who had travelled with Schäfer to Tibet would be pulled deeper into Himmler's empire.

Himmler was the second most powerful Nazi leader. The historian Richard Breitman called him "the architect of the Final Solution" – that is to say he was the man who built, piece by piece and with a numbing attention to detail, the bureaucracy of genocide. By far the best educated of the Nazi leaders, Himmler became a virulent 'scientific racist' and used his power to sponsor pseudo-scientific ideas about the purity of German blood.

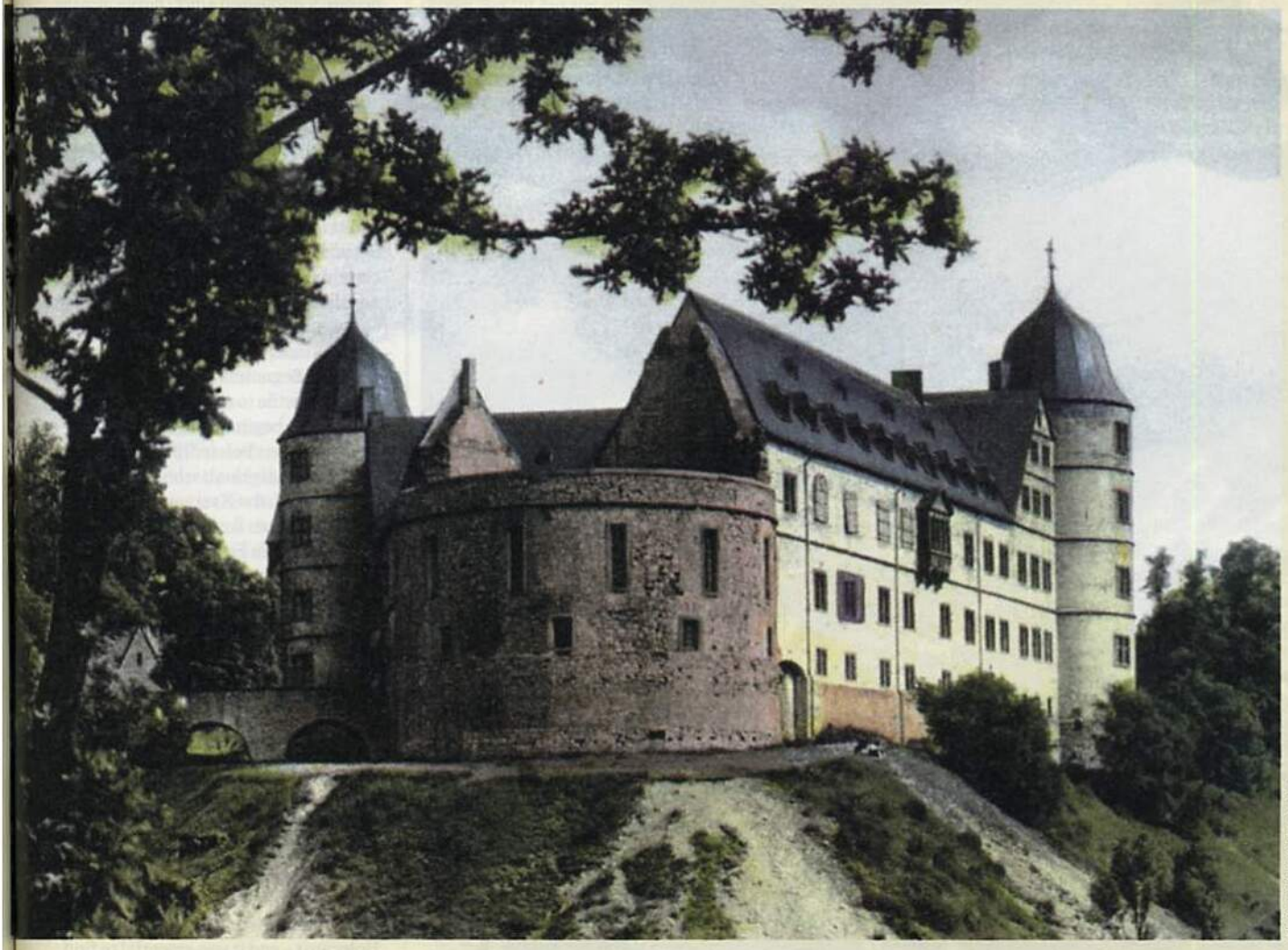
Himmler was a hobbyist. He dabbled in prehistoric Venus figures, telepathy, vegetables, reincarnation, homeopathy, 'Germanic astronomy', Hindu castes, runes, heraldry, the Baghavad Gita, the 'World Ice Theory', and the lost kingdom of Atlantis. Always zealous and punctilious, Himmler explained to his Gruppenführer in 1943 "What about the women and children? I have decided to find an entirely clear solution here too. The fact is I did not feel entitled to exterminate the men... and to allow the avengers in the shape of their children to grow up for our sons and grandsons. It was carried out, without – as I believe I am able to say – our men and our leaders suffering injury to spirit and soul."

The story of Heinrich Himmler can begin as well as anywhere in the small German town of Wewelsburg in Westphalia. Perched atop the lush valley of the Oder is the castle Himmler bought in the Autumn of 1933 and turned into both a monastery and fortress – an SS Vatican, the centre of the world (seen at top, right). What really took place here remains a puzzle – but what can be deciphered from its strange history reveals much about this odd, prim and lethal little man.

Today there is little to be seen. Behind a locked iron door in the North Tower is a stone-lined room ringed by Romanesque arches. This was the *Gruppenführersaal* where, according to *SS-Brigadeführer* Walter Schellenberg, high-ranking SS officers assembled to "practise spiritual training and meditation exercises".

Below this is an equally mysterious chamber. Its walls are exposed brick – making it resemble a torture chamber – bending upwards to a rounded dome. This was a place of the dead – a Valhalla – where 'knights' of the SS were ceremonially honoured after death. The walls were lined with the

LER: ARCHITECT OF THE FINAL SOLUTION



KREISMUSEUM WEWELSBURG

heraldic emblems of senior SS officers and decorated with runes.

Himmler set about realising his vision in 1935. Architectural plans were drawn up and models constructed. They showed vaunting, paranoiac ambition – transforming not only the old castle but also the village of Wewelsburg, turning it into an SS city. Local villagers would be moved to a new 'model village' several kilometres away. The projected cost was 250 million Reichsmark. Here, the SS elite would receive spiritual and *weltanschauliche* (worldview) training. Libraries would be assembled, astronomical observatories constructed, appropriate works of art acquired, special furniture made and decorated with arcane symbols and runes. Archæological artefacts would be given pride of place. To achieve this, prisoners were brought from Sachsenhausen concentration camp near Berlin. A new camp was built in the Niederhagen Forest near Wewelsburg. The prisoners were forced to cut stone blocks from a local quarry and move them to the castle. More than a thousand were worked to death.

This, then, was the obsessive, cranky and murderous man who became Schäfer's patron.

CORBIS

ABOVE: Heinrich Himmler addressing members of the SS at Wewelsburg Castle (top) during World War II.

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receiving urgent telegrams from Himmler himself. He was given a promotion and promised various rewards if he came home. So Schäfer boarded a steamer in New York and came back to the Fatherland. It was a Faustian moment, even if he did not realise it then. Now Schäfer would enter the strange world of the Reichsführer, Heinrich Himmler: he was summoned to the Reichsführer's lair in the 'Olympic summer' of 1936.

Himmler must have viewed this young adventurer as a hero sprung from the pages of the novels of German adventure writer Karl May who was so much admired by Hitler, an ideal example for the SS. For Schäfer the rewards must have seemed all too tantalising: as soon as he was summoned to Himmler's SS headquarters in Berlin he seems to have proposed a new, German expedition to Tibet. Himmler was excited and supportive and soon Schafer found himself drawn deeper and deeper into a lethal spider's web.

Tibet was the Nazis' Shangri-la

As I slowly gathered more details about Ernst Schäfer, I was fortunate enough to have another breakthrough concerning another member of the expedition.

GUTEN TAG, DR BEGER

There was someone else who had written about the Schäfer expedition. Alex McKay was teaching at London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and had written the definitive account of British relations with Tibet. He provided me with some excellent leads – and mentioned, almost in passing, that he knew someone who had been corresponding with Dr Bruno Beger, the last European survivor of the expedition, who had been convicted of war crimes in 1970. I soon found myself in possession of a copy of Beger's privately published *Tibet Diaries* and the strong possibility of an interview. A few weeks later, I was on a very bumpy Lufthansa flight to Frankfurt.

It was just two minutes before 12.45, our appointed arrival time, and Bruno Beger, the last European survivor of the German Tibet Expedition, was waiting on his balcony, watching us approach and shielding his eyes from the sun. Satisfied we would be on time, Beger – clearly a stickler for punctuality – waved and disappeared behind a curtain.

It was a remarkable, and in some ways chilling, moment. For years, I had heard only that Beger was inaccessible and fiercely hostile to any discussion of his past. At the beginning of the 1960s, German courts belatedly began to prosecute individuals who had been involved with the Nazi genocide. One of them was Bruno Beger, who had been living quietly in Frankfurt. After his conviction as an 'accomplice to murder', his family had built an impenetrable wall around him. And yet here he was – waving from the balcony of a bland apartment block in a bland, affluent German town. I had not met a man before who had participated in the Nazi Final Solution and I had mixed feelings about doing so now. By agreement, questions at this first meeting could be asked only concerning the Schäfer Expedition. This was acceptable for now, but I knew I had to raise the matter of his activities in Auschwitz. The story of the SS expedition linked Tibet with the Holocaust – and it was essential to find out how and why. It would take other meetings and many letters to persuade Beger to discuss these 'other matters'.

As he opened the door, 'Dr' Bruno Beger was immediately recognisable. At 92, he was still the tall, aquiline-featured man with Aryan movie star looks who invariably stands taller than anyone else in the photographs of the 1938 expedition. He was dressed in dapper grey trousers, a crisp white shirt and elegant braces. His two daughters took up positions like sentinels on either side. Beger's gaze was frank and challenging. He had strikingly large hands.

Above his desk I noticed black and white pictures of the Schäfer party in Tibet. There was also a portrait of Sven Hedin, the Swedish explorer who inspired Schäfer and was an admirer of Hitler. There were many books about Tibet. On a shelf above the door I then caught sight of his most remarkable treasure. It was a collection of 'face masks' made on the cold, high plateau of Tibet. One of them, which his daughter lifted down for us, is of 'German Akeh' – who, unknown to me at the time of this first meeting with Beger, was still alive and living in Gangtok in Sikkim – where the Schäfer expedition had set out in the monsoon months of 1938. The room, I

ABOVE: In the field – Karl Weinert, Bruno Beger with native subjects and expedition manager Edmund Geer.

realised, was a kind of memorial: these frozen Tibetan heads from long ago and far away spoke of a different life. Tibet was Beger's Shangri-la, a land of lost contentment – a place he was privileged to experience before he chose to become involved with other projects of Heinrich Himmler's and took a train to Auschwitz one morning in June 1943.

I interviewed Beger on two occasions. I concentrated at first on his upbringing and education. I wanted to find out why he had become devoted to Himmler's cause. I hoped that he might be able to disclose how the noble quest for knowledge had become so profoundly contaminated. Beger was not going to tell me that story directly, and was often canny about why I was asking particular questions. But, when I listened to the tapes afterwards, I was surprised by how much he *had* revealed about the making of an SS anthropologist.

It was Beger's work that connected Schäfer's expedition with occult science and the quest for the origins of the Aryan master race. By the time he was born, in 1911, many of the ideas that would become excuses for murder had been laid down at the highest levels of the German academy in its universities, laboratories and museums. Here they simmered and fermented, warmed by nationalist passion and the frustration of military defeat. Himmler's SS did not originate ideas about the superiority of the Nordic Race – but they *enacted* what the science appeared to imply.

THE SECRET DOCTRINE

In their different ways, Himmler, Schäfer and Bruno Beger were fascinated by Tibet.

The origins of their fascination, which was both scientific and mythical, can be traced back to that odd 19th century charlatan, Madame Helena Blavatsky. It was she who had put the Himalayas firmly on the occult map. Although she had flirted with 'Egyptian Mysteries', India was for her the source – and to the north were the Himalayas which, she believed, formed the 'veil of Isis' itself, concealing the world of the Masters which lay in Tibet. In New York she had conjured up spiritual masters called 'Mahatmas'. In India she was inspired to concoct their complete history – one that began in Tibet. Now she called her 'Masters' the 'Brotherhood of the Snowy Range' and insisted that she had herself crossed the Himalayas to the Tashilunpo Monastery, near Shigatse, where she received instruction from Mahatma 'Koot Hoomi'. It was all nonsense, but her voluminous book *The Secret Doctrine* was a huge success – and it made an especially powerful impression in Germany and Austria. Blavatsky had even considered moving the Theosophical headquarters from India to Germany after the English Society for Psychical Research had exposed her as a fraud. (She was caught out writing the letters which she claimed were 'precipitated' by her Mahatmas.) Some 50 years later, after 1933, Theosophy would become even more popular as Germans were encouraged to turn away from Christianity and embrace faiths that were considered to be more Aryan. For many, ***The Secret Doctrine*** appeared to reconcile science and belief, nature and myth, and in Germany catalysed an older intellectual tradition.

HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS

ABOVE: Founder of the Theosophical Society, Madame Helena Blavatsky.

BELOW: The gateway to Auschwitz, Beger's destination in June 1943.

Blavatsky put the Himalayas on the occult map

More than a century before Himmler told Schäfer that the "Aryans had come from heaven" (as he did at their first meeting in Berlin), German intellectuals and scientists made race the cornerstone of their thinking. Quite deliberately, they set out to undermine the authority of the Bible and the status of its original language, Hebrew. Mediæval and Renaissance philosophers by and large accepted the Biblical story of the origins of man. The first humans were Adam and Eve – and the different races were simply descendants of the three sons of Noah. The first language was Hebrew, the father tongue. When European traders and explorers began to send back reports about a rich diversity of native peoples in the Americas and Africa, the Biblical account began to look like a stretch. Shem, Ham and Japhet would surely not claim credit for American Indians, or native Australians. This Noachian or Jewish genealogy of mankind was quickly toppled from its pedestal. Human origins were now sought outside the Garden of Eden and Noah's family tree.

In France, Voltaire speculated about China; the Germans, though, looked towards India. At Jena University, where Bruno Beger would study anthropology more than a century later, Friedrich Schlegel was elated when he discovered

BETTMANN / CORBIS

Sanskrit, and was convinced that the very first civilisations had emerged in Asia. Schlegel came to believe that Sanskrit was the language of elites and had first been spoken by a race of cultured warriors in northern India. Driven by the noblest of motives, these masterful northerners had conquered and civilised the world. They had founded colonies in Egypt – where they seeded the civilisation of the pharaohs – and all the way to Scandinavia where they became the ancestors of the German people. The proof was in their words: Indian and European tongues had all "sprung from some common source". Schlegel gave a name to his masterful northerners: they were Aryans. Because of their association with the north, either in India or Europe, they also came to be called Nordics. In Sanskrit the word means 'aristocrat' or 'noble' – and Schlegel made a connection between the Aryan and a German word '*Ehre*' meaning honour.

The Aryan version of history blitzed through German culture. In philosophy, folklore, geography and philology the Aryans made a triumphant entry, stomping down from the Himalayas and civilising the world. They, the Aryans, were the common ancestor of Indians, Persians, Greeks, Italians, Slavs, Scandinavians, Anglo-Saxons – and especially Germans. Aryans were soon being called Indo-Germans and given the status of Wagnerian heroes: they were youthful, tall, blond, generous, brave and creative. Jews were seen to possess antithetical qualities – and a new kind of antisemitism was born.

Science had one other ingredient to add to the Aryan cult. With the rise of Imperialism, and the conquest of Africa and the East, a new science emerged. Anthropology – the study of man – was from the beginning the science of 'other men'. The anthropologists followed the flags of imperial conquest. The diverse races they encountered in Africa and Asia became objects of exploitation and then subjects for study. German imperialism was late in coming – but it was founded on envy of other empires, and as a consequence was more ruthless. Its anthropologists acted with equal enthusiasm and aggression. Just as biologists believed they were defending the purity of their Indo-German blood line, so anthropologists would go out into the world to clarify and secure the story of the Aryan Conquest behind the ramparts of science. And they would move steadily closer to the origins of that civilisation – to the Himalayas and the Snowy Fortress of Tibet. The origin of Aryan Man was somewhere in northern India, perhaps behind the icy bastions of the Himalayas. In 1933, Germany was overwhelmed by a political despotism whose leaders had absorbed many of the pseudoscientific ideas planted by their 19th century forebears. Now, they had the power to find the source of their culture and blood.

BELOW: A Sikkimese with the body of the *shapi*, a previously unknown goat.

The history of the world is shaped by sex

FROM *GEHEIMNIS TIBET*

THE EXPEDITION

So what were Schäfer and his SS comrades looking for in Tibet? Why did he take Bruno Beger with him? Some of the answers come from the convoluted story I've tried to tell in my book – a tale in which science and the occult became entwined in ways that often made them indistinguishable. Beger was, asa he told me himself, looking for links between his own race and the Tibetan aristocracy and he used a strict system of mathematical measurement to try to find them. He never used the term Aryan, or even Nordic: instead he referred to 'Europid' traits, although this was really the same thing. Schäfer himself believed that central Asia had been the point of origin for m ost animal species: the expedition was, in essence, a quest for origins.

In other ways, Schäfer's expedition was doing some pretty straightforward science – and this was one of the great surprises of my research. The oldest member of the party was Ernst Krause, the party's cameraman who made the film *Geheimnis Tibet* with Schäfer. He was also a botanist and entomologist and it would be absurd to see anything ideological in what he did. Nazi botany? It's an absurd idea. Krause's work on Tibetan wasps is still considered groundbreaking by modern entomologists. His colleague Karl Wienert was a geophysicist whose task was to measure variations in the Earth's magnetic field in the Himalayas. From the middle of the 19th century German scientists had been pioneers in this field, and Wienert saw himself as the bearer of a proud German tradition. He often had to work in extreme conditions and even, when the party finally had permission to enter Tibet, in secrecy.

Schäfer himself was, as ever, determined to cull local wildlife and bring the remains back to German museums. It led to a rather amusing incident. Schäfer had arrived in India in the Spring of 1938 with no permissions at all from the government in Lhasa. Even the German consul there had tried to persuade him to go back to Berlin. But, characteristically, he stuck it out until the British agreed to let him spend six months in the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim, right on the border with Tibet. This was the 'Age of Appeasement' and Schäfer played that card very well: he knew that no one wanted to upset the German government by offending an expedition sponsored by Himmler. Many months later, however, there was still no sign that Schäfer would get anywhere near Lhasa. The British refused to let him across the border. He must have despaired of returning to Berlin with anything but a few birds, flowers and bugs. Then he heard about a mysterious animal called the *shapi* that, according to legend, lurked in some of Sikkim's remotest valleys. Schäfer had a hunch that the animal was unknown to science, so he set out to find it and shoot one. After many tribulations he succeeded –

(BK) 135/KB

CHRISTOPHER HALE

ABOVE: Bruno Beger pictured while being interviewed by the author.

LEFT: Bruno Beger gauging the physiognomy of a Tibetan native.

bringing back to camp in triumph what was essentially a kind of dark-skinned goat. Now, at last, he could make a triumphant return to Germany. But, it was at that moment that he managed to at last get permission to cross the border. By January 1939, the expedition would be in Lhasa.

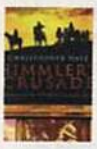
When the five young German men returned to Germany they were almost immediately overwhelmed by Hitler's war, which began a month after their triumphant arrival in Berlin, where they were greeted at the airport by Himmler himself. Although Schäfer made his film and published at least three accounts of his time in Lhasa, the scientific results of his expedition were fragmented and many of the treasures brought back from the roof of the world lost and destroyed. Today it is not surprising that there is little interest in bringing together what remains scattered in museums all over Germany. The SS expedition to Tibet has also gathered a thick crust of myth and misunderstanding that has obscured its remarkable real significance.

Schäfer was not looking for Atlantis, nor did he bring Tibetan monks back to Germany to die in the ruins of Hitler's bunker. But his activities were not purely scientific either, however much he protested that they were until the day he died in 1992. It is very likely that by early 1939, Schäfer was already thinking about how he could contribute to the German cause. Soon after his return to Berlin, Schäfer and Himmler began hatching a scheme to return to Tibet and train a guerrilla army to attack the Raj. Schäfer called it the 'Lawrence Plan' after T E Lawrence of Arabia. It all came to nothing when Himmler's enemies in the German foreign office undermined their plotting. This may explain Schäfer's peculiar interest in Kaiser Thapa, who was a Gurkha. Once he had been trained in Berlin, Kaiser might have been sent back to join a Gurkha regiment and become a Trojan horse at the very heart of the British Raj.

Of Krause's botany and Wienert's magnetic measurements there is little to be said. Their work belongs in the museum. So too, in a different way, does the anthropometric work of Bruno Beger. Even in 1938, the measuring of native peoples to determine their racial identity and kinship was falling into disrepute. Beger's own attempts to make sense of his Tibetan data were inconclusive and fragmentary. They did not tell the story of Nordic expansion that he had wanted to bring back to his professors and *Reichsführer* Himmler. Much of what he reported simply showed what any visitor to the markets in Gangtok or Gyantse could have seen – that the peoples of India and Tibet were highly diverse. His 'Europid traits', too, have a simple explanation that has nothing to do with a wandering Aryan Master Race – an idea that so fascinated Himmler that he murdered millions of Jews, Slavs and Gypsies to ring-fence the purity of Aryan blood.

After the 7th century, the Tibetan kings extended the boundaries of the empire north, south, east and west. Tibetan merchants and soldiers were violently, profitably and intimately in contact with other empires and states – Persians in the west, Indians to the south, Chinese and Mongolians to the East. To the north, a quite remarkable multitude of peoples travelled back and forth along the Silk Road, an interlaced network of tracks whose caravans also traded in jade, spices, wool, musk, ivory, gems and precious metals. The cast changed as empires rose and fell, but they included Greeks, Scythians, Persians, Turks, Indians, Arabs, Chinese, Sogdians and Mongolians. They were Buddhists, Manicheans, Nestorian Christians and Muslims. Some of the first Buddhist monks in Tibet came from the Tarim region along the Silk Road. From the 7th century when King Songsten Gampa began building his empire, Tibetan soldiers, merchants and administrators would have been part of this thronging world. There would have been a tumultuous gene flow in the cities and caravanserai: in other words, history is shaped by sex.

In 1994, an astonishing discovery was announced by the London newspaper *The Mail on Sunday*. A cache of mummies had been discovered in Ürümchi, in China's Xinjiang Province. The mummies were spectacularly preserved in the dry desert sands, but what caught the attention of the world was something else. These people were tall and light-skinned and dressed in tartans. The discovery of the Ürümchi mummies confirmed the almost limitless variety of the people of the Silk Road. The tall, fair-skinned people were not supermen or women, but ordinary people who had joined the ceaseless ripple of trade and migration in Central Asia. The ancient people of Tibet and their descendants were simply part of history. Their genes, and even the shape of their heads and the colour of their eyes, would show traces of that complex past. And if Bruno Beger discovered anything it was simply that, and not the fingerprints of the Aryan Master Race. FT



Himmler's Crusade: The True Story of the 1938 Nazi Expedition to Tibet is published by Bantam Press and is available from all good bookshops, priced £20.00.
This article has been adapted by the author from the original book.

RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED READING

Peter Padfield, Himmler: Reichsfuhrer-SS (Cassell, 2001)

Ernst Schäfer, Geheimnis Tibet (F Bruckman, 1943)

Nicolas Goodrick-Clark, The Occult Roots of Nazism (New York UP, 1985)

Michael Burleigh, The Third Reich: a New History (Macmillan, 2000)

Karl Meyer and Shareen Brysac, Tournament of Shadows (Counterpoint, 1999)

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

CHRISTOPHER HALE is an independent film-maker whose work on science and the arts, made in numerous exotic locations, has been shown on many TV stations, including the BBC and Channel 4.

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53. The Trickster

MARK PILKINGTON goes on the trail of the Trickster in an interview with George P Hansen, the man determined to shake up parapsychology

Books about fortean phenomena tend either to examine the field from the cold, dispassionate distance of the sociologist, or from the blinkered, tunnel-visioned insider's perspective of the believer or sceptic. It's rare for an author to take the position of what we might call Schrödinger's Fortean, in which one can study the field simultaneously from within and without, thus gaining an intimate understanding of the unusual, often bizarre dynamics of our chosen arena, while also being aware of its relationship to the wider culture.

In *The Trickster and the Paranormal*, George Hansen manages to do this with enough gusto and enthusiasm to carry the reader through 400 pages encompassing trickster mythology, all manner of paranormal phenomena and their attendant personalities, sociology, anthropology, folklore, semiotics, even literary theory. At the book's core is the idea that the archetypal characteristics of the trickster – deception, liminality, disruption, transgression, paradox, ambiguity – are inherent to all paranormal phenomena, and those who involve themselves with their promotion and study.

It's a bumpy, disorientating ride at times, and although Hansen's conclusions remain open to multiple interpretations, all of them are sure to be as refreshing and controversial for the hard-nosed sceptic as they are for the literalist believer.

FT: Tell us about your background and how you came to write the book.

GH: I was employed full time in parapsychology laboratories for eight years. Early on, I met the late Marcello Truzzi, a founder and co-chairman of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of the Paranormal (CSICOP). He resigned from the Committee a year after it began and then started the journal *Zetetic Scholar*. Marcello was a sociologist and also a magician. He stimulated my interest in sceptic-vs-proponent debates and in the topic of conjurors in psychical research.

My published papers in the refereed parapsychology journals cover experimental work, mathematical statistics, methodology, controls against fraud, and field research on ghosts. Most of the funding for the laboratory work was provided by private sources, but a small portion came from a US intelligence agency. All the research I was involved in was open, that is, unclassified, though at least some was monitored by intelligence personnel.

During the late 1980s I became interested in the UFO phenomenon, and as I studied it, I began to see the extensive overlap between the US government's UFO and Remote Viewing programmes. Both UFO and psychic phenomena are frequently enmeshed in a matrix of trickery and deception. At some point I knew that a theoretical understanding of this conjunction should be developed, so I began collecting material on the trickster figure of mythology.

In 1993 I read about the concepts of liminality and anti-structure in anthropology, and many ideas immediately clicked into place..

FT: You accuse the parapsychology and ufology movements of ignoring issues of trickery and deception in their fields of research. What has the response from the paranormal community been to your book?

GH: The nuts-and-bolts ufologists who head the major US UFO organisations are a bunch of old white guys. They simply don't understand alternative perspectives. On the other hand, the members, who subscribe to UFO magazines and attend conventions, are typically much more open to paranormal approaches. For instance, our local UFO group in New Jersey has regular presentations by ghost researchers.

I don't really expect too many parapsychologists will understand much of the book. Many are trained as psychologists or physicists, and that training often hinders thinking about larger issues. In addition, the parapsychology research community in the US is rapidly aging. I'm not particularly popular for some of my ideas, and I've been suspected of being a CSICOP spy, which, I'm sure, CSICOP would find hilarious! I hope to find a more receptive audience with younger researchers and newcomers.

REUTERS / BRIAN SNYDER

ABOVE: Bill Clinton, a trickster figure in the political realm.

FT: As part of your discussion of government disinformation, you raise suspicions about the closing of the government's remote viewing project. Given the miniscule – for a military operation – amounts of money involved, and the apparent levels of success that the programme achieved in its heyday, it seems incredibly unlikely that they would abandon the project completely. Are you aware of "freelance" remote viewers still doing government and military work? I know that Prudence Calabrese, with whom I took some RV lessons – (see *FT126:22-23*), claims to have been approached by the FBI post-9/11.

GH: I'm in no position to know exactly what the government is doing, but like yourself, I think it very probable that government agencies still use

LEFT: George Hansen.

"Did she teach you to taste Bill Clinton's penis?"

remote viewing.

You say that you took lessons from Prudence Calabrese. Did she teach you how to taste Bill Clinton's penis?

FT: No, not that I can recall....

GH: On her web site she boasts of teaching people to do just that. She also trains women to have orgasms with remote viewing.

Ms Calabrese is a wonderful exemplar for trickster theory. Lowering of sexual inhibitions and violation of sexual taboos is part of the trickster archetype. Her public visibility makes her especially effective in tainting the field and assuring its continued marginality. This 21st century remote viewer has achieved the sexual notoriety of some of the 19th century spiritualist mediums.

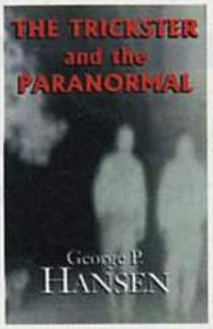
FT: You discuss "bounded" (eg psi experimentation, mediumship, magic, where people actively seek to engage with anomalous phenomena) and "unbounded" (or spontaneous) paranormal experiences. Is it common for parapsychologists to experiment with, for example, ritual magic?

GH: I'm not aware of any parapsychologists significantly involved in ritual magic, however, quite a number, including myself, have taken part in séances. Spiritualism places greater emphasis on observable phenomena than do practitioners of ritual magic. Some of the writings on Chaos Magic, like those of Peter Carroll and the pseudonymous Ramsey Dukes, are very compatible with my ideas.

It's my impression that in the last couple of decades neo-pagans and others involved with ritual magic have striven for acceptance and respectability. This has been accompanied by a downplaying of the efficacy of magical ritual, sometimes demeaning it with psychological explanations.

Pentecostalism in the US shows the same pattern. In its earliest years, lots of exotic phenomena were reported, but as it became more institutionalised and respectable, the reports declined. Today scholars writing sympathetic histories of Pentecostalism downplay the "disreputable" phenomena of the early years. Those scholars thereby contribute to its further rationalisation and disenchantment.

As new religions work to become respectable and integrate themselves with the secular world, the divine intrudes less. John Wesley had some understanding of this dynamic, and in fact, Max Weber drew upon Wesley in formulating his ideas in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.



The Trickster and the Paranormal is available from **www.xlibris.com** and online booksellers.

FT: What about the trickster within the political arena? It strikes me that politics and politicians fit all the descriptions for trickster figures while, paradoxically, operating deeply within, even controlling, the bureaucratic structure of our society. Do you think that having such complex figures running a country gives more power to trickster-reality?

GH: Bill Clinton was a trickster character. His sexual escapades and prevarications are examples. Also, he was raised in a single-parent household, which is a predisposing factor to tricksterhood. Clinton had a sympathy for minorities and is sometimes called "America's first black president." He was highly popular with the American people but not with the Washington establishment. By the way, he had an interest in UFOs. One of the appendices of the Starr report listed the books on his bookshelves, and nestled among the works on history and politics was one on Roswell.

Trickster concepts can illuminate the hostilities between Islam and the West. The US is the superpower, whereas Iraq and the Taliban are underdogs, and thus they will display trickster qualities.

Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein are far more charismatic than George Bush or Tony Blair. They have considerable sympathy among impoverished peoples, and they even inspire martyrdom. But it's difficult for many Americans to understand their popularity. Saddam and bin Laden have evaded capture so far, which is another trickster manifestation.

Trickster analyses could be extensively applied in these situations.

FT: Is Western culture in any danger of absolute disenchantment, or is the trickster too strong a force to be reckoned with?

GH: Disenchantment, in sociologist Max Weber's sense of the word, entails the suppression and elimination of magic (paranormal phenomena). In his writings on the topic, Weber explicitly mentioned miracles, telepathy, and weather control. Today, sociologists almost universally avoid this key aspect of Weber's theories. But this avoidance is itself part of the disenchantment process. Elite cultural groups such as academic science and liberal Protestantism are major forces for rationalisation and disenchantment.

For instance, mainline Protestant theologians today find questions about the reality of miracles to be extremely embarrassing. They have little comprehension of the supernatural, and their churches are in steep decline. On the other hand, evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity accept miracles, and those denominations are flourishing in the US.

Liberal Anglicanism is now almost fully disenchanted. But some of the African Anglican communities are not, and they are sending missionaries to first-world countries.

A variety of forces assure that absolute disenchantment does not occur, though the long-term trend is in that general direction.

The Harry Potter books and movies are a case in point. They demonstrate our culture's fascination with magical ideas, but ultimately, Harry Potter is not a force for enchantment, but rather for the contrary. The stories are explicitly fictional and thus subtly reinforce the message that magical phenomena are fantasy. That's the message received by most readers. Fundamentalist Christians condemn Harry Potter, just as CSICOP members denounced *The X-Files*. Those attacks prove that even paranormal fiction can enchant, but such enchantment is quite limited.

FT: You mention the idea that the conscious mind might actively seek to limit psi function as a defence against the kind of information overload effect that could lead to destructive paranoia. If we are constantly swimming in a sea of "idea-plasms" and thought energy, might such controls be essential in a society such as ours? If this is the case, do you think that this is something that might have evolved species-wide over time?

GH: Maybe conscious awareness does somehow limit psi. Your question reminds me of Colin Bennett's book *Politics of the Imagination*. He describes how establishment science uses advertising techniques to control people's thoughts. Such subtle controls are necessary for society to function. Marginalising of paranormal phenomena is found in virtually all cultures, and so that marginalisation is probably beneficial for society.

FT: So is it dangerous to encourage one's own psychical abilities?

GH: There are side effects of strongly functioning psi, and most laboratory researchers want to deny them. The instabilities in the lives of many government-trained remote viewers should be cause for concern. Their training and implementation of RV was quite intense. Most people casually trying to develop their abilities don't become so heavily involved, and the risks are less for them. Like most things, it's a matter of degree. FT

MARK PILKINGTON is a journalist specialising in strange phenomena, and a contributing editor to *Fortean Times*. He lives in London.

Nazi UFOs

Stories of the scientific advances of the Third Reich have circulated for decades. KEVIN McCLURE explains that the flying saucer legend ain't exactly rocket science.

It's much easier to dismiss an absurd claim that is fresh and new than one which has been around for a while and taken root. It is, for example, simple enough to assess the credibility of David Icke's assertion that Dr Josef Mengele – seemingly after he died – used mind-control to make a young American woman go to Balmoral Castle and officiate at rituals where the Queen and Queen Mother turned into reptiles and devoured small children; or to judge whether, as 'Sir' Laurence Gardner tells us in an explanation on which his whole 'grail bloodline' theory depends, the otherwise unmentioned daughter of Joseph of Arimathea (in this version, the brother of Jesus Christ) popped over to Wales to marry and settle down with Bran the Blessed, a mythical god-figure who spent much of his life as a detached head (and who, even if we take the original myths as a guide, would have been well over 100 years old at the time of the marriage).

Dislodging established and much-repeated nonsense is much more difficult, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't try. And in cases where such nonsense tends to exaggerate or glorify the activities of the Nazis during World War II, I think we should try particularly hard. In that spirit of endeavour, let's see what we can do about the very untrue story of Viktor Schauberger – builder of flying saucers.

The detailed and ever-growing fiction of the Nazi UFO mythos tells us that the Nazis were so technically, creatively and scientifically brilliant that, had the war only lasted a few months longer, they would have won it by using their amazing flying saucers, which were so very nearly ready for combat when the Allied forces entered Czechoslovakia and Southern Germany.

There are two hurdles the mythos has always fought to overcome. Firstly, that there is no historical record that the characters said to have been involved in saucer development – figures like Schriever, Belluzzo, Habermohl, Miethe and Kleinever – had anything to with the development of 'flying discs'. Only Guiseppe Belluzzo has any verifiable scientific background at all; Schriever was a delivery driver, and it is unclear whether Habermohl and Miethe even so much as existed as identifiable individuals.

Secondly, there is no historical evidence – physical or photographic – of the supposed flying discs. We are repeatedly told of craft of immense power, and sometimes

We are told of flying discs of immense size and power

immense size, defying all scientific parameters known before or since. Yet not so much as a bolt or a tachyon drive remains to verify their existence. There are just the oft-reproduced, fuzzy post-war photos taken by those who wished to convince us of saucer reality, but who usually succeeded only in demonstrating the unexplored potential of domestic containers and the art of close-up photography.

The mythos argument is that rather than being extraterrestrial in origin, the discs photographed between 1947 and 1955 were actually developed from captured Nazi blueprints, by captured Nazi scientists. Relocated to America, they chose to have their miracle craft chug unimpressively around the dusty back roads of the USA, sometimes landing, sometimes crashing, and sometimes – particularly the very small discs – utilising conveniently-placed string to hang from trees, swinging gently and photogenically in the wind. Not one claim of flying Nazi discs pre-dates 1949 and the increased US media interest in reports of flying saucers.

ENTER SCHAUBERGER

Once upon a time, in Austria, there was a forester called Viktor Schauberger (above). He lived from 1885 to 1958, and in his long life he devised and worked on a variety of inventions. He had a keen and original interest in the motion and motive potential of water, and the most notable of his achievements were in the design and development of log flotation methods and flumes in the 1920s. Thereafter, he seems to have tried to develop his ideas towards

OPPOSITE PAGE: CORBIS / UFOS BY ALEX TOMLINSON. IMAGE MANIPULATION: ETIENNE GILFILLAN

FLUGELRAD: ALEX TOMLINSON IMAGE EDITING: ETIENNE

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turbines and cheap natural power and energy. There is little evidence that any of these later ideas ever reached fruition, and although his son and grandson have continued with some more theoretical aspects of his work, it seems that no repeatable demonstration of Schauberger's supposed flight technology has ever taken place.

For those who want to further the cause of secret Nazi science, or to maintain the flying saucer mystery, or both, Viktor Schauberger has been a prayer answered. Not because he actually built flying discs for the Nazis, but because some round, bulbous inventions he probably worked on were photographed and, with a bit of airbrushing to add Luftwaffe insignia, they looked rather like the round, bulbous inventions that figured in 1950s ufology. That he left no physical or technical evidence of his supposed disc experiments, was at times somewhat confused about the facts (there is evidence that he spent some time in a psychiatric hospital), and kept a diary in a shorthand that was difficult even for his family to comprehend, could only help. He even had a long, impressive beard to suggest that he was a misunderstood genius. History was ripe for rewriting – and not just the once.

THE HISTORY OF A MYTHOLOGY

The 'Nazi UFO' mythos has itself had three distinct phases of life, with long fallow periods between. The first was in the early 1950s, when a few individuals, none of them connected with any post-war rocket or aviation programme in Russia, the USA or anywhere else, claimed to be at least partly responsible for the saucer sightings of the period.

History was ripe for re-writing

Schauberger – still alive at the time – didn't get a mention at that stage, and made no claim of his own.

Then, around 1975, Canadian Ernst Zundel, also known as Christof Friedrich and notorious for his pro-active and well-publicised scepticism about the reality of the Holocaust, published (as Mattern Friedrich) the book *UFO – Nazi Secret Weapon?* Amid questions like "Is Hitler Still Alive?" and "Did the Nazis have the Atom Bomb?" he set out a range of wild speculations about lost Nazi technology and, for the first time to my knowledge, introduced a number of the key elements concerning Schauberger's supposed involvement. Zundel writes: "Schauberger did experiments early in 1940-41 in Vienna and his 10 foot (3m) diameter models were so successful that on the very first tests they took off vertically at such surprising speeds that one model shot through the 24-foot (7.3m) high hangar ceiling. After this 'success', Schauberger's experiments received '*Vordringlichkeitsstufe*' – high priority – and he was given funds and facilities as well as help. His aides included Czech engineers who worked at the concentration camp at Mauthausen on some parts of the Schauberger flying saucers. It is largely through these people that the story leaked out."

Zundel also provided an account of Schauberger's later history and death.

Although Schauberger actually died at home in 1958, Zundel's version has it that: "Viktor Schauberger lived for some years in the United States after the war where he was reported to be working on UFO projects. His articles were greatly discussed and then one day in Chicago he just vanished. His battered body was found and as to who killed Schauberger or why has never been discovered. One version has it that gangsters tried to beat his revolutionising secrets out of him and accidentally killed him."

Zundel published the first drawings of what he referred to as the 'electro-magnetically-powered Flying Hats'.

In the next year, 1976, a biography of sorts appeared (*Living Water*, Gateway Books, 1997), written by Olof Alexandersson, a Swedish 'electrical engineer and archive conservationist'. While admitting that "the information for the basis of this book is fragile", he managed, from unlisted sources, to add substantially to the mythos: "After a while Schauberger received his call-up. It was now 1943, and even older men were being drafted. He was eventually appointed the commandant of a parachute company in Italy, but after a short stay, orders came from Himmler that he should present himself at the SS college at Vienna-Rosenhugel. When he arrived, he was taken to the concentration camp at Mauthausen, where he was to contact the SS *standartenführer* Zeireis, who told him he had a personal greeting from Himmler. 'We have considered your scientific research and think there is something in it. You can now either choose to take charge of a scientific team of technicians and physicists from among the prisoners, to develop machines utilising the energy you have

discovered, or you will be hanged.'

Schauberger understandably chose the first option (insisting that his helpers must no longer be regarded as prisoners) and so an intensive period of study began. After the SS college, where the research was taking place, was bombed, Schauberger and his team were transferred to Leonstein, near Linz. The project they initiated there was a 'flying saucer' powered by a 'trout turbine'.

The results of the research were surprising: it was both a success and a failure. Schauberger later explained this briefly in a letter to the West German defence minister Strauss on 28 February 1956: "The first 'flying saucer' rose unexpectedly, at the first attempt, to the ceiling, and then was wrecked."

Alexandersson offered slightly different pictures of the 'flying hats', probably just removing the Luftwaffe insignia Zundel had added, and reproduced drawings of other absurd imaginary wartime UFOs copied directly from Zundel.

Since then, architect Callum Coats has published a series of books reflecting a persistent interest in Schauberger's theories about water and implosion. In 1996 (*Living Energies*, Gateway, 2001), he published what appear to be actual photos of the 'flying hats', as well as reprinting earlier drawings, telling us that: "Despite its compact size, this machine generated such a powerful levitational force that when it was first switched on (without Viktor Schauberger's permission and in his absence!), it sheared the six quarter-inch [6mm] diameter high-tensile steel anchor bolts and shot upwards to smash against the roof of the hangar."

Coats also quotes one 'A Khammas', writing in the undated Issue 93 of *Implosion* magazine: "There are many rumours about what Schauberger was actually doing during this period, most of which suggest he was in charge of developing 'flying discs' under contract to the army. It later became known that the 'flying disc' launched in Prague on the 19 February 1945, which rose to an altitude of 15,000 metres [50,000ft] in three minutes and attained a forward speed of 2,200 kph [1,370 mph], was a development of the prototype he built at Mauthausen concentration camp. Schauberger wrote, 'I only first heard of this event after the war through one of the technicians who had worked with me'. In a letter to a friend, dated the 2 August 1956, Schauberger commented, 'The machine was supposed to have been destroyed just before the end of the war on Keitel's orders.'"

The tale is a fantasy taken from Rudolf Lusar's *German Secret Weapons of the Second World War* (1957). Perhaps it is significant that while we are told that Schauberger twice effectively rewrote the book on aviation technology, we are also told that he was both absent from the demonstrations, and unaware that they had taken place.

THE MYTHOS RETURNS

The most recent phase of belief in the Nazi UFO mythos began in the last six years. Susan Michaels, in *Sightings: UFOs* (Fireside, 1997), reproduces a range of palpable fictions from unreliable sources, and introduces some freshly-minted nonsense. Possibly becoming confused by inconsistent, fictional accounts of a meeting with Hitler in 1933, she says: "Also in 1939, German physicist Victor Schauberger developed a design for a flying saucer using energy he claimed could be harnessed from the tonal vibrations, or 'harmonics', of the cosmos. As far-fetched as this theory seems, Schauberger's research attracted the attention of Adolf Hitler, who offered to provide funds to build Schauberger's own anti-gravity saucer. But Schauberger, who was a deeply committed pacifist, turned Hitler down."

The following year, UK aviation writer and photographer Bill Rose wrote an article ("UFO sightings – Why you can blame Adolf Hitler") in the popular science magazine *Focus* (October 1998). After, apparently, four years of research, he concluded that: "The father of the German disc programme was Rudolph Schriever, a Luftwaffe aeronautical engineer assigned to Heinkel in 1940... a full-sized piloted version, the V2, first flew in 1943 with Schriever at the controls.

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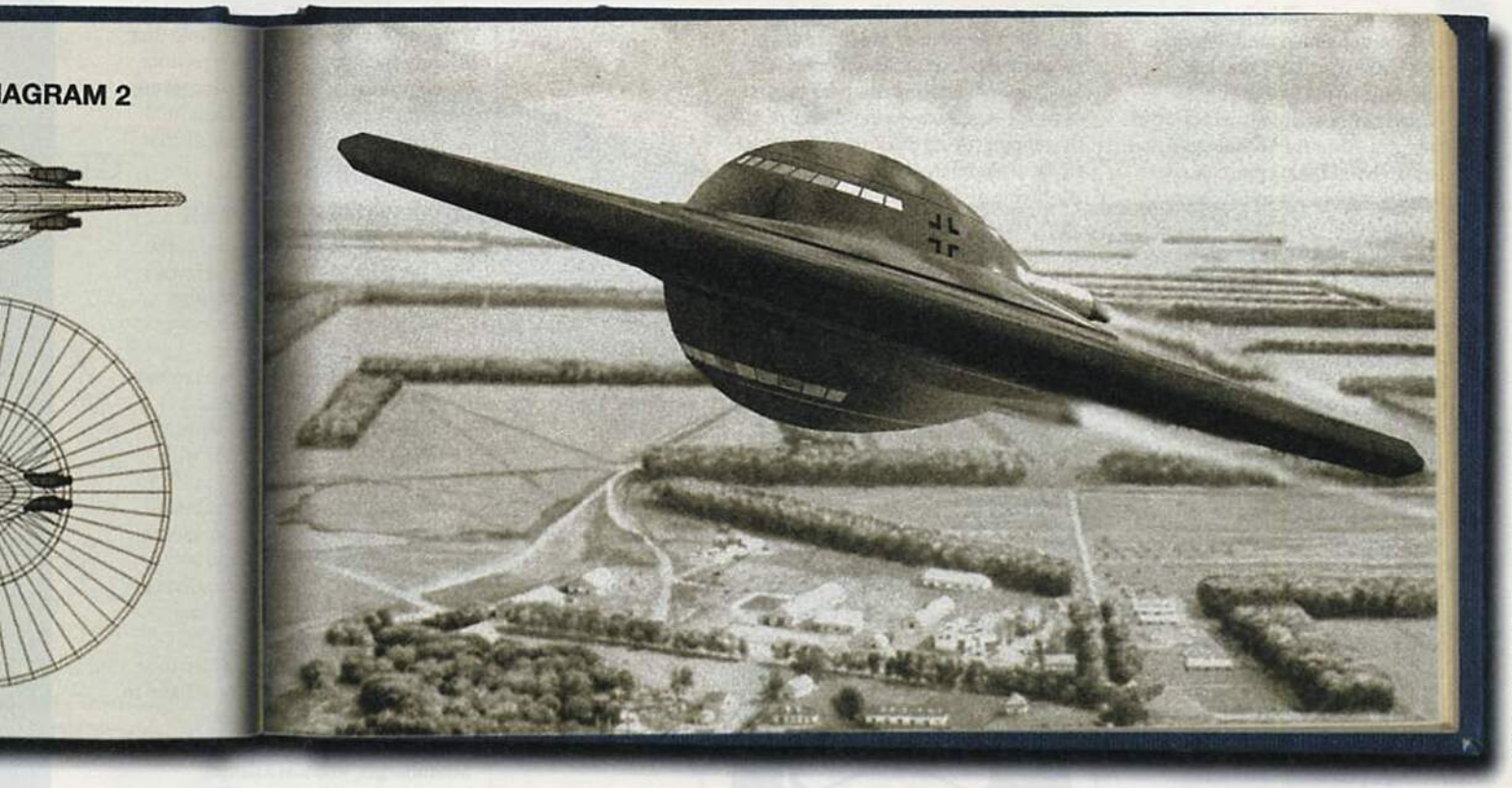
SCHRIEVER 'FLYING TOPS': ALEX TOMLINSON IMAGE EDITING: ETIENNE



MIETHE V-7: ALEX TOMLINSON IMAGE EDITING: ETIENNE

Thirty feet [9m] in diameter, the V2 had a fixed central cabin around which a ring with adjustable vanes rotated to provide thrust in both the horizontal and vertical planes... Early in 1944, Schriever's top-secret programme was moved to Czechoslovakia... Schriever was joined by a number of leading aeronautical engineers... Another addition was the Austrian scientist Viktor Schauberger, who just before his death in 1958, claimed to have worked on a highly classified US disc programme in Texas."

Rose seems to be the first to have suggested that Schauberger actually worked together with the four other 'engineers' who, according to the mythos, built flying saucers, but even Rose's remarkable 'sources' pale in comparison to those apparently available to Gary Hyland, author of *Blue Fires* (Headline, 2001), who says of Schauberger: "The first test-flight of the machine was reportedly amazingly successful (it apparently shot through the roof of the laboratory and had to be recovered some distance away)... [Schauberger] developed his ideas further, to the point where a full-sized, though unmanned flying disc prototype that used his new engine apparently flew under radio control... At the end of the war, the American forces got to Leonstein ahead of the Russians and found Schauberger and his team of experts. After letting the members of his team leave after a thorough interrogation, the Americans held Schauberger in protective custody for six months; it would seem that they knew exactly what he had been up to and wanted to prevent other nations, as well as renegade Nazis, from continuing to use his services".

'The Bell' glowed blue and destroyed the animals

THE COOK REPORT

Exceeding even the rich imaginations of Michaels, Rose and Hyland is the much-publicised book *The Hunt for Zero Point* (Century, 2001) by Nick Cook, a notable freelance aviation journalist who has written for the very respectable *Jane's Defence Weekly*. In the course of an investigation lasting, we are told, some 10 years, he appears to have been comprehensively misinformed by a whole series of individuals; or perhaps by individuals acting on behalf of a group with a specific agenda. It seems that for all the informants he gathered along the way, none of them ever warned Cook that people with an investment in making the Nazi regime (and the SS in particular) look good are quite happy to use deception to do so.

Without going through Cook's oddly directionless book in any detail, it's worth noting that his primary source about Schauberger was a Polish gentleman named Igor Witkowski. Witkowski, apparently, volunteered to drive Cook around, showing him sites where Schauberger had worked for the Nazis, constructing and testing 'The Bell', an experimental device with two cylinders spinning in opposite directions. Cook was told that this glowed blue and destroyed plants, birds, animals, and sometimes humans. Internet searches for Witkowski bring him up in conjunction with the loopy, '1930s-crashed-saucer-back-engineered-by-the-SS' end of Polish ufology, and he has self-published six or more separate items with titles like *Hitler's Supersecret Weapon*.

Witkowski told Cook that his extraordinary information came from an unnamable source, which Cook seems to have accepted without question. It seems that a "Polish government official" phoned Witkowski, inviting him to view documents and take notes about the development and concealment of extraordinary Nazi technology as given in a record of "the activities of a special unit of the Soviet secret intelligence service." Witkowski's evidence, together with a visit to Schauberger's grandson, leads Cook to reproduce the material about imprisonment by the US after the war, and the apartment being blown up by the Russians, together with various unlikely claims about Schauberger being offered massive sums of money by (right-wing) Americans in the years before he died. Cook also informs us that Schauberger's designs had been stolen by Heinkel in the early part of the war; that he had worked on secret projects for the Nazis from 1941-45, sometimes using slave labour; that he had created, specifically for the SS, disc-shaped machines with engines so revolutionary that even Cook, an aviation journalist, fails to explain how they worked.

One of the problems faced by the Nazi ufologists is to explain the complete absence of palpable evidence. Cook chooses to adopt SS General Hans Kammler for this

purpose. Kammler used concentration camp labour to build the Atlantic Wall, contributed to the construction of the Auschwitz gas chambers, and was in charge of the V2 missile programme, which again ruthlessly exploited slave labour. He is also, it seems, the person who spirited away all traces of Schauberger's astonishing technical achievements, allegedly to his own advantage by way of trade with the approaching Allies. However, the earliest version I have found of this story dates from 1989, put about by Nevada Aerial Research, who have done much to publicise the supposed wonders of Nazi technology (and they later came up with the most unpleasant of the tales of dominant and brutal alien beings living below the US air base at Dulce). I do not believe that their account of Kammler had any existence prior to 1989, or that it is true.

There is no period of history more thoroughly examined than 1939-1945, and no subject more closely examined than the Nazis, and more particularly, the SS. Had there been any reality in the claims for the construction and testing (or more) of high-speed flying disc technology by the Third Reich during that period, then we would have every reason to expect that it would have been discovered, reported, and analysed by writers and researchers far more competent than those referred to above. Yet it never has been.

Nonetheless, there is a recurrent and developing counter-cultural argument that insists these extraordinary events actually took place. It is a theory that has sold millions of books and videos, and it continues to fuel a belief that, given just a few more months, the true genius of the Nazis, the fanaticism of the SS, and the inspiration of the Führer would have won through, and the Allies – no, not just the Soviet Union, but *all* the Allies – would have been defeated.

While I'm happy to be challenged by solid evidence, I've found no reason to believe that Viktor Schauberger knew anything of this. I think he died before it was made up. He never built a flying disc, let alone one that flew using some unknown and unprecedented method of propulsion. He wasn't sought out by Hitler or the SS, didn't choose slave workers from Mauthausen to assist him, and wasn't held by the Americans after the war because of his technical knowledge and achievements. If the Russians burned his flat down, I doubt that they even knew whose flat it was. The only truth seems to be that he visited the USA in the 1950s, leaving behind him components of two experimental water turbines; the objects that Zundel (who adorned them with Nazi insignia) said flew.

I have been told, all too often, not to use the term 'Nazi UFOs', because this is *really* about secret and suppressed technology. It just happens that the Germans were clever enough to invent it, and even if Ernst Zundel manufactured or exaggerated some of the facts, then he only did it for the money.

On 'The Zundelsite', in the 'Zundelsite Zgram' for 26 December 1998, the matter is explained in his own words. He says of his publications and his radio appearances: "I realised I had discovered a potent publicity tool with this topic – which would get me lots of free time on radio and TV shows, to expose other, more 'politically incorrect' topics to vast audiences... I slipped in lots and lots of 'Revisions of History'... I talked about the disinfecting procedures to protect the valuable worker inmates in the Dora-Mittelwerke rocket underground assembly factories... I mentioned the medical facilities in the camps, the calorie count of the meals served, etc... The UFO books themselves also had very important politically otherwise impossible-to-tell messages embedded within them, such as the National-Socialist Party program and Hitler's analysis of the Jewish question... All that – and I made a fine bundle of money! The money I made from the UFO books I invested in publishing the booklets *Die Auschwitz-Luge* - a translation of *The Auschwitz Lie*, Dr Austin App's booklet *The Six Million Swindle* and *A Straight Look at the Third Reich*; and, of course, later, *Did Six Million Really Die?* by Richard Harwood."

If Zundel's own account is to be believed – and I think it probably is – then his fictions about Nazi UFOs have funded the distribution of Holocaust revisionist material around a substantial part of the world. So, at the end of the day, there's more at stake here than just tall tales and technological fantasies; there would appear to be a good ethical argument to stop repeating such fictions and to put the 'Nazi UFO' mythos to rest once and for all. FT

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Kevin McClure wrote *The Fortean Times Book of the Millennium* (1996), predicting that nothing of interest would happen. His initial investigation of the Nazi UFO mythos appeared in *Fortean Studies 7*. He edited *Abduction Watch* and has written for *FT*, *Magonia*, *Fate* and others. He is currently collecting evidence of the manipulative presence of neo-nazi and racist influences in the field. In real life, he works for the government.

JU-EF126 'KEKER': ALEX TOMLINSON IMAGE EDITING: ETIENNE

the spe

LONGINUS

BURSTEIN COLLECTION / CORBIS

CONSTANTINE

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ALARIC

The Spear of Destiny has been sought by religious and military leaders since the early centuries of the Christian Church. ROY BAINTON examines its confused history and asks whether Adolf Hitler really seized the very spear used to pierce Jesus's side.

The Spear of Destiny, now held in the Hofburg Museum, Vienna.

"But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water."

JOHN 19:34

The dictionary tells us that the word *Hallow* means **1.** *'to consecrate or set apart as being holy'* **2.** *'venerate as being holy'*. The world is full of hallowed artefacts – there's probably one within walking distance of your own house. Some, though, are more mythical and mysterious than others – while others are often downright ludicrous. According to Arthurian legend, the 'Thirteen Treasures of Britain' are stored on Bardsey Island.[1] They include the very handy 'Hamper of Gwydnno Garanhir', which possesses the ability to turn one meal into a hundred. Once found, the old hamper (I'm not making this up) would be ideal for parties when teamed with the 'Horn of Bran', which can provide any drink to order. And, offering a real alternative to the after-pub curry, the 'Crock of Rhygenydd' automatically serves up your favourite dish. At the grander and better-known end of the scale there's that elderly favourite, the Turin Shroud, no end of weeping Madonnas, the still-missing Holy Grail[2] and the Lost Ark of the Covenant.

But one of the most sinister remnants of a bygone occult age is an old piece of iron, bound with gold thread, which rests on a red velvet

ar carriers

JUSTINIAN

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CHARLEMAGNE

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BARBAROSSA

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HITLER

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cushion in Vienna's Hofburg Museum. The Hofburg describes it simply as "an ancient relic", although to power-crazed European fanatics throughout the past 1,000 years it has become known as *Der Heilige Lance*, or 'Holy Spear'.

Every saint in the Catholic Church has his day, and 15 March is that of St Longinus[3] (16 October in the Orthodox Church, old calendar).[4]

The legend of Longinus (known previously as Gaius Cassius) sits alongside that of Cartaphilus, the so-called 'Wandering Jew'[5] as one of those darkly enduring old chestnuts which pebbledash the fabric of the Christian Church's history. Longinus was the centurion present at the Crucifixion, who is mentioned (not by name) in the New Testament (John:19:34)[6] for his compassionate act of curtailing Christ's suffering by puncturing him with his lance. Longinus made it to Hollywood in 1965 when he was played by John Wayne in the ponderous epic, *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, where the 'Duke' will be forever fondly remembered for his one line, delivered in true Death Valley drawl: "Truly this man was the son of God."

According to the Vatican's version of the event, Longinus was almost blind, but when the reported blood and water issued from Christ's wound, some of it splashed into the Roman soldier's eyes and his sight was restored. He converted to the then fledgling religion we now know as Christianity and left the army to become a monk in Cappadocia. There, he was arrested by the Governor, had his teeth pulled out and his tongue cut off. (One of the miracles following this is that he could still speak clearly, apparently).

Like Joseph of Arimathea, Longinus was already a closet follower of Jesus before the Crucifixion. And this is where the mystery of what has become known as 'The Spear of Destiny' really begins. Joseph of Arimathea was

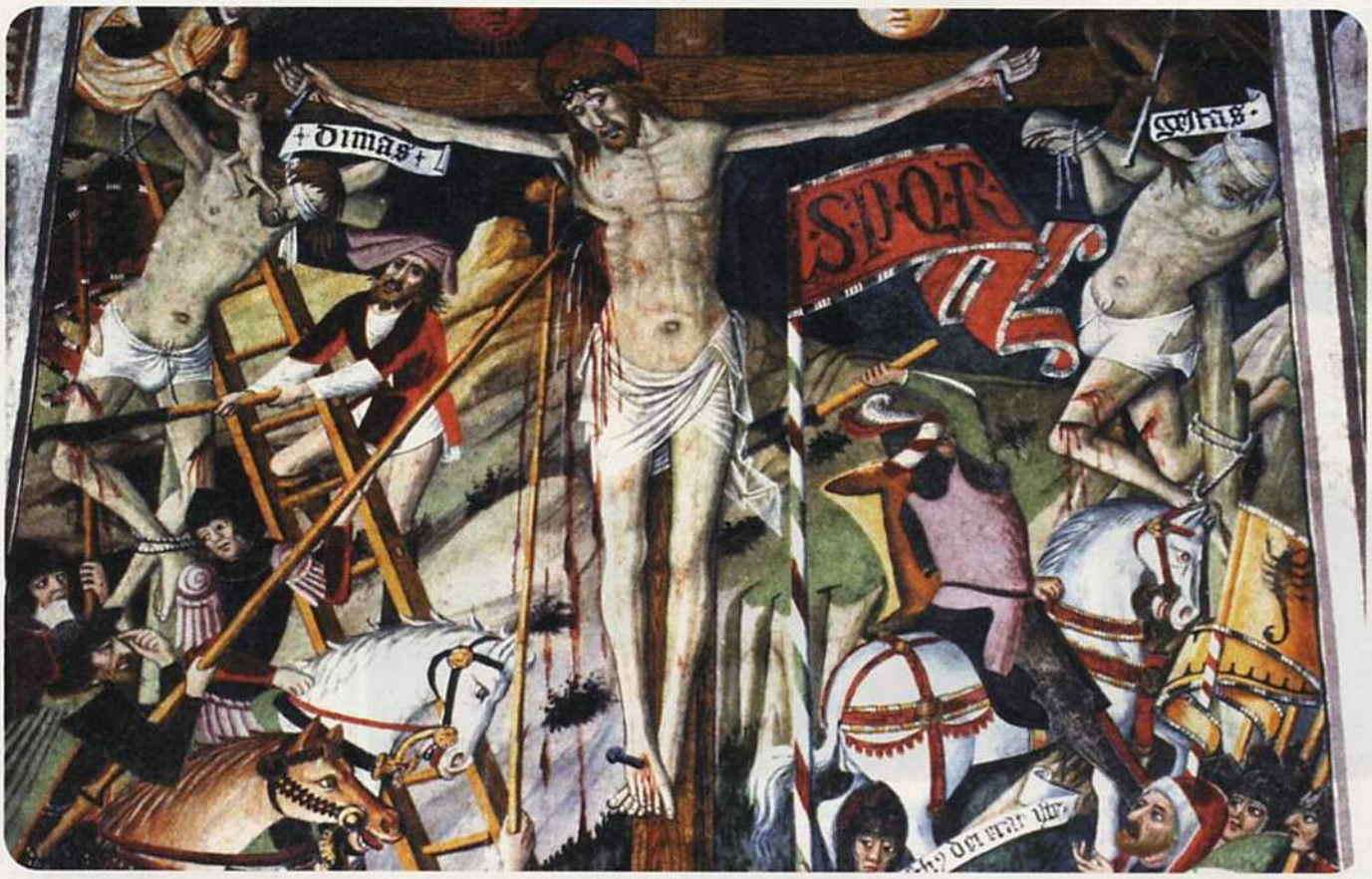
The spear was thrown by Saul at the young David

a fairly well-off Judean, a member of the religious/legal administration known as the Sanhedrin. The events surrounding Christ's execution so convinced him of Jesus's status as the Messiah that Joseph offered to place the body in his own tomb. He was imprisoned for many years, but was released by Vespasian[7] (AD 9-79). During his imprisonment legend has it that Joseph was kept alive and well by the Holy Grail. In AD 63 Joseph is said to have brought the Grail and the Lance of Longinus to England, where he founded Glastonbury Abbey and thus set in motion Britain's conversion to Christianity,[8] raising the thorny question of how the Spear began to crop up throughout Middle Eastern and European history in the ensuing centuries.

In fact, the Spear used to pierce the body of Jesus may well be one of several possible weapons. The ancient adviser to the Sanhedrin, Annas, and the high priest, Caiaphas, were determined to show the crowds at Golgotha (the 'Place of The Skull') that the Christ hanging on the cross was nothing but an ordinary man, albeit a troublemaker, heretic and rebel. Jewish law decreed that no man should be executed on the Sabbath. According to Biblical historians, the date of the Crucifixion was Friday, 5 April, AD 33.[9]

Crucifixion was a very slow death, so Caiaphus petitioned Pontius Pilate to proceed to Golgotha and break the limbs – and mutilate – the bodies of the victims to ensure they were dead by the following Sabbath. The symbol of authority they would carry was the Spear of Herod Antipas, the King of the Jews. A party, led by the Temple Guard, set out on its grisly task, with the Captain of the Guard carrying Herod's spear. This weapon had a powerful provenance. It was rumoured to have been forged on the instructions of the ancient Hebrew prophet, Phineas. It was the same spear held by Joshua when he brought down the walls of Jericho, and the one thrown by King Saul, in a fit of jealousy, at the young David.

When the party arrived at Golgotha and systematically set about mutilating the two unfortunates nailed up at either side of Jesus, Gestas and Dismas, the Roman soldiers turned their backs in disgust. Only Longinus was curious enough to watch the ensuing bone-breaking, stabbing and skull-crushing. He approached Christ and, to save him further pain and humiliation, thrust his lance into his right side between the fourth and fifth ribs.[10] (This contradicts the New Testament version – John's gospel states that Jesus was already dead. The Longinus story may derive from the Apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*, 7:8 and 8:4.). Whether Longinus used his own lance or the Spear of Herod is debatable. Whichever spear was used, it was destined to join the Cross itself, and the Crown of Thorns,[11] as a holy relic that would pass through the hands of the mighty for the next 2,000 years. In the fork of the spearhead a nail from the cross was placed and secured with gold wire. As the legend grew, it was said that anyone who possessed the Spear held the destiny of mankind – for good or evil – in his hands.



CHARLES & JOSETTE LENARS / CORBIS

Charlemagne always slept with Longinus's Spear at his side

The actual progress of the Spear (or spears) through time, and the specific details of its violent, chequered history, is open to debate, and varies with each source consulted. The ultimate work on the legendary lance is Trevor Ravenscroft's *The Spear of Destiny*,[12] first published in Great Britain in 1973.

The book, although fascinating, is a frustratingly ornate mix of myth, legend and extremely suspect research. Ravenscroft's aversion to including sources or footnotes, the confusing chronology and the slapdash index place it more in the *Indiana Jones* canon than that of reliable historical detective work. Nonetheless, Ravenscroft, a White Magician, was a fascinating man. A commando officer in WWII, he was captured in North Africa after leading an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate General Erwin Rommel. After spending four years in a Nazi concentration camp he entered "a state of transcendent consciousness" which led him to study the Spear of Destiny.

Back in England, he met a Viennese exile, Dr. Walter Johannes Stein. Stein died in 1957, but Ravenscroft's long conversations with him had yielded enough startling information on the Spear to justify a book. Stein was a historian,[13] and apparently used clairvoyance to investigate history. Relying on spirit communications instead of more reliable source material hardly put him in the Simon Schama league.

According to Ravenscroft, (and various other sources) the Spear was still venerated as a relic in Jerusalem at the end of the 6th century. When the Persians took Jerusalem in AD 615, the lance was broken into two parts (perhaps giving birth to the numerous, competing spears to be found around the world). The shaft turned up in Constantinople, and remained there until 1492 when the Ottoman Sultan Beyazid II sent it as a gift to Pope Innocent VIII. Today the shaft is said to be in one of the pillars supporting the dome of St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. As to the head of the Spear, one version of the tale[14] has it in the hands of St Louis, the 13th century crusader and King of France. He is supposed to have placed it in the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, where it was lost during the French Revolution. A copy of this spear was made which ended up in Krakow, Poland (later identified as a fake by Hitler – but we have a few centuries to get through before *Der Fuhrer* arrives on the scene).

But there is a stronger legend about the 'real' spearhead. In AD 285, the Spear of Destiny made another Roman appearance in the hands of the Commander of the Theban Legion, Mauritius. Mauritius and his Legion had taken to Christianity, and fell foul of the Roman tyrant Maximian, (who ruled with the emperor Diocletian between AD 286 – 305)[15] Maximian was keen on the old Roman Gods and every one of Mauritius' 6,666 men, rather than worship Roman idols, accepted martyrdom. While the Spear didn't seem to bring Mauritius much luck, it was passed on to Constantine the Great (AD 288-337) and successfully saw him through the Battle of Milvian Bridge in AD 312. Wearing Imperial purple and declaring himself 'the 13th Apostle', Constantine brandished the Spear at the Council of Nicea in AD 325.[16]

When building his 'new Rome' in Constantinople, (formerly Byzantium), Constantine is said to have carried the Spear as he trod out the boundaries of his city, saying: "I follow in the steps of Him whom I see walking ahead of me".

Between Constantine's rule and the Crusades, many other leaders are said to have possessed the Spear. Theodosius conquered the Goths when he took it into battle in AD 385, Alaric the Bold held it aloft as he sacked Rome in 410, and the Gauls found it a great inspiration when they defeated Attila the Hun under the Visigoth Theodoric in 452. Justinian (483-565) used the Spear to close the Schools of Athens, while Charles 'The Hammer' Martel (c.689-741), grandfather of Charlemagne and ruler of the Franks, actually used the Spear as a hand weapon against the Arabs when he defeated them at Poitiers in 732. His grandson Charlemagne fought 47 campaigns with the Spear and always slept with it at his side; the Spear's loss was often accompanied by a reversal of fortune, and Charlemagne is sometimes said to have

ABOVE: A depiction of the Crucifixion, by Giovanni Canavesio, from a fresco in the Chapel of Notre Dame, La Brigue in southern France. Roman soldier Gaius Cassius (Longinus) is shown ending Jesus's suffering by plunging his lance into his side.

died (in 814) after dropping it.

Somewhere between all this conquering and bloodshed, the Spear is thought to have been buried for a while in Jerusalem, to avoid theft by invading armies, along with remnants of the True Cross and the Holy Nails. In the early fourth century, the emperor Constantine's mother, Helena, unearthed the relics in Jerusalem. The Spear was reburied in Antioch, to prevent its capture by Saracens.[17] The picks and shovels were out again in 1098 during the first Crusade. The Crusade's Second Army, led by Bohemond of Otranto, had managed to take Antioch as a relief Saracen army approached. Bohemond's men were starving, and the ravaged state of the city itself offered no relief from hunger. The Crusaders were in need of a miracle, and a poor peasant from Provence called Peter Bartholomew provided one. He had experienced a recurring dream in which St Andrew had shown him a spot by the south chapel of St Peter's Cathedral where he should dig. There, the dream insisted, Bartholomew would find the Spear of Longinus. The Bishop of Adhemar insisted that the genuine lance was in Constantinople, but Raymond of Toulouse, commander of the Provencal Army, sent a party of 12 men to dig at the appointed spot, and, sure enough, they found the rusty spearhead.[18] It obviously gave a great spiritual boost to the Crusaders, who carried the talisman through several victories.

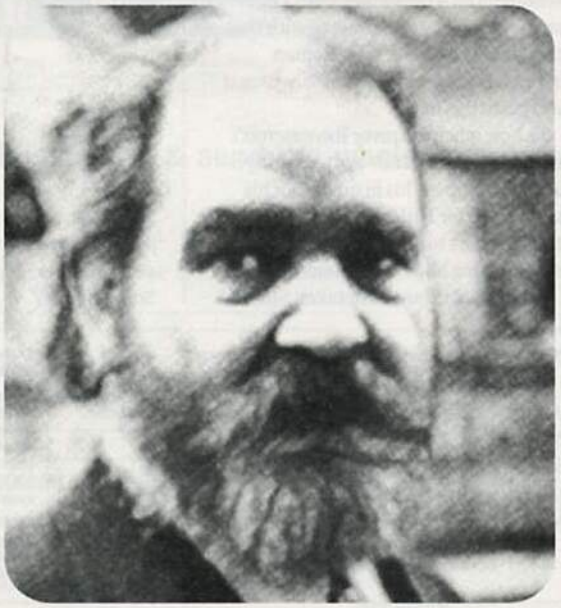
Soon the Spear was on its tour through history again, in the hands of Frederick Barbarossa (1125-90) and his grandson, Frederick II Hohenstauffen (1194-1250). Although there are gaps in its history between the 13th century and the 20th, to list all the rulers who claimed to have held the Spear would fill an entire issue of *FT*. It is known that Charlemagne's bejewelled prayer book, certain orbs, sceptres and crosses – and the Spear – were kept in Nuremburg after his death for up to 400 years. Napoleon Bonaparte apparently knew about the Spear, and Charlemagne's treasures were thus moved to Vienna in 1794 to keep them out of Boney's grasp.[19]

So, at last, this talisman, which by 1900 had gathered to it a powerful body of myth and legend equalled only by the Holy Grail, and which was said to give its holder power, for good or evil, over the fate of nations, finally came to the attention of a scruffy failed artist in the Hofburg museum in Vienna.

The story of Adolf Hitler's fascination with the Spear of Destiny, as told to Trevor Ravenscroft by the mysterious Dr Walter Johannes Stein, forms a major part of Ravenscroft's book. Stein claims to have discovered in an occult bookshop in Vienna, run by one Ernst Pretsche, a dog-eared copy of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, the mediæval Grail romance so beloved of Wagner (and the basis of Hitler's favourite Wagner opera). The book's margins had been heavily annotated in pencil by one of the shop's regular browsers, the young Hitler. This was during Hitler's so-called 'missing years' of 1909-1913. Stein believed the annotations to be "the work of somebody who had achieved more than a working knowledge of the Black Arts!"

Ravenscroft goes further: "It suddenly dawned on him that he was reading the footnotes of Satan!" Stein eventually had the chance to meet Hitler, and together they went to see the *Heilige Lance* in the Hofburg museum, Vienna. Ravenscroft describes the occasion: "Hitler stood beside him [Stein] like a man in a trance, a man over whom some dreadful magic spell had been cast... the very space around him seemed enlivened with some subtle irradiation, a kind of ghostly ectoplasmic light. His whole physiognomy and stance appeared transformed as if some mighty spirit now inhabited his very soul, creating within and around him a kind of evil transfiguration of its own nature and power."

Hitler had a knowledge of the Black Arts



BELOW: Dr Walter Johannes Stein, the man who claimed to have found Hitler's own copy of *Parzival*. Did he actually meet Hitler?

BOTTOM: Trevor Ravenscroft, the man who says yes; friends say no.

From this point on, Ravenscroft's *Spear of Destiny* relies on Stein's account of how Hitler had been involved for some time in various Satanic practices, as well as erudite historical studies, with the whole tale culminating in the future *Fuhrer's* destiny – to claim the Spear and change the world.

Fast-forward to Vienna on 14 March 1938: It is the day before the Catholic saint's day of St Longinus. The German Army has already completed the *Anschluss* – the annexation of Austria to the Third Reich. Hitler has arrived a day late because the belt-and-braces security of Heinrich Himmler required extra time to weed out possible assassins in Vienna. 200,000 people have thronged the streets in an orgy of *Führer* adulation. Now, it is after midnight as Hitler steps out from the Imperial Hotel in the company of Himmler. Awaiting them at the Hofburg are Martin Bormann's son-in-law, lawyer Major Walter Buch, Wolfram von Sievers of the SS Occult Bureau, and the vicious leader of the Austrian SS, Ernst Kaltenbrunner.

Days before the *Anschluss*, following Himmler's thorough research into the *Heilige Lance*, the SS had been in Vienna making sure it was safe, and building a dossier on every member of the Hofburg's staff. Vienna's own civil police were powerless to intervene, even before the arrival of the *Wermacht*; if they had approached the Hofburg they would have found it surrounded by the black-uniformed troops of the SS. It is said that Hitler spent an hour alone in the presence of the Spear – even Himmler had to leave the room. Eventually, Charlemagne's treasures, including the Spear, were transported across the German border to Nuremburg, the city that was to be the spiritual centre of the Third Reich. Adolf Hitler's vision of three decades earlier had been fulfilled. He at last possessed the Spear of Destiny.

The Spear was placed, firstly, in St Catherine's Church, Nuremburg, and then behind several huge steel doors in a bunker beneath the 11th century *Kaiserburg*, under the protection of the SS and Nuremburg's Mayor Liebl, a staunch Nazi. On 19 April 1945, as Allied troops overran the city, Liebl burned all his documents and committed suicide.[20] It was to no avail, as eventually, through the hard work of SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) and their travelling art research organisation, MFAA (Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives), several prominent Nazis crumbled and revealed the whereabouts of the treasures. Thus for a brief period, from the afternoon of 30 April 1945, the Lance of Longinus

ANTHROPOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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became the temporary 'property' of the United States. On that same afternoon, as if fulfilling the Spear's curse, Adolf Hitler committed suicide in Berlin.

When General 'Blood & Guts' George S Patton arrived in the vault in Nuremburg, he was the first of the many US military visitors to show any real understanding of the Spear. He relentlessly grilled the Nuremburg officials about its history, and exploded with rage at their apparent lack of knowledge. As if the Spear was balancing the books, Patton survived the war but died following a car accident at Mannheim on 9 December 1945. On 6 January 1946, the Spear, along with the other treasures of the Holy Roman Empire, arrived back in Vienna, where it remains to this day.

So, how much of Trevor Ravenscroft's perplexing book stands up to scrutiny? He no doubt knew his history – but his main source for Hitler and the Spear, Dr Stein, appears to have had more than a few confusing blips in his memory.

Several historians have taken Stein's yarns about life with the young Hitler to pieces. Christoph Lindenberg reviewed Ravenscroft's book in the German journal, *Die Drei ("The Three")*, December 1974, noting that Ravenscroft tells us of Hitler sitting in the cheap seats of the Vienna Opera House in the winter of 1910 for a performance of Wagner's *Parsifal*. Impossible, because the opera was 'banned' from performance anywhere other than at Wagner's Bayreuth *Festspielhaus* until 1914, and was only performed in Vienna for the first time on 14 January that year.[21] Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, in an appendix to his book *The Occult Roots of Nazism*,[22] also takes Ravenscroft apart with reference to one of Hitler's supposed black magic mentors, Guido von List. Ravenscroft writes that List was driven out of Vienna because of his involvement in sexual rites, which were part of the fun and games in his 'blood brotherhood' movement. Goodrick-Clarke insists that "there is not a shred of evidence for such rituals – List was never obliged to leave Vienna and he enjoyed the patronage of prominent Vienna figures..." As for the annotated copy of *Parzival* found in Herr Pretsche's bookshop – you'll find a similar plot in Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 1842 novel, *Zanoni*. Lindenberg checked the Vienna business directories from 1892 through to 1920 and found no bookshop run by a 'Pretsche'. The myths go on – Hitler's poverty, (he wasn't hard up) his missing gonad (surprisingly still hanging around), and the *Führer* existing in a flophouse, when in fact the said 'dump', on Vienna's Meldenmannstrasse, was a reasonable hotel for which Hitler paid the moderate rent of 15 kronen per month.

So the major work on the Spear, though a cracking read, is riddled with a sloppy disregard for historical fact. What does remain is the Spear itself. Is it genuine? If it really gives the holder 'power over the fate of nations', it hasn't done Austria much good since the end of the Hapsburgs.

If there is a *real* Spear of Destiny, then it probably rests where 'power over the fate of nations' really lies today – locked in a vault in the Pentagon. FT

ABOVE: Hitler shown in a contemporary oil painting as a Mediæval Teutonic knight and saviour of Germany.

See also 'I-Con Man' [FT70:35-37] for a discussion of four 'Spears of Destiny'.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

ROY BAINTON is a former merchant seaman and the author of *Honoured by Strangers*, a biography of WW1 submariner, diplomat and spy Captain Francis Cromie. He last appeared in these pages with his account of ghost ships and ghost submarines [FT173: 46-52; FT174: 42-49]

NOTES

1 See *The Arthurian A2Z* www.mystical-www.co.uk The 13 treasures are said to be guarded by Merlin, who once lived there in a glass house.

2 Monty Python fans will also recall with affection 'The Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch'.

3 Catholic Online Saints at www.catholic.org/saints

4 Feasts and Saints of the Orthodox Church at www.oca.org

5 See *Fortean Times* 136 July 2000 pg.33-38 *Mischief Myths*

6 See also Mark 15:39, Matthew 27:54, Luke 23:47

7 William Rose Benét, *The Reader's Encyclopaedia* A&C Black 1972.

8 IBID.

9 Trevor Ravenscroft, *The Spear of Destiny* Samuel Weiser Inc. York Beach, Maine USA 1982.

10 Kersten Holger & Elmar R. Gruber, *The Jesus Conspiracy – The Turin Shroud & The Truth About The Resurrection* Element Books, Shaftesbury 1994.

11 Alma E. Guinness (Ed.), *Mysteries of The Bible* Reader's Digest Books 1988. The Crown of Thorns was given to St. Louis, King of France , in 1238 by Baldwin II, the Latin Emperor of Constantinople. After the French Revolution it was moved to Notre Dame Cathedral and what is left of it, a band of rushes, is now stored in the treasury.

12 Ravenscroft.

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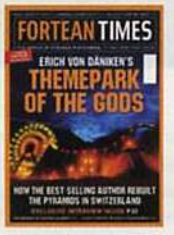

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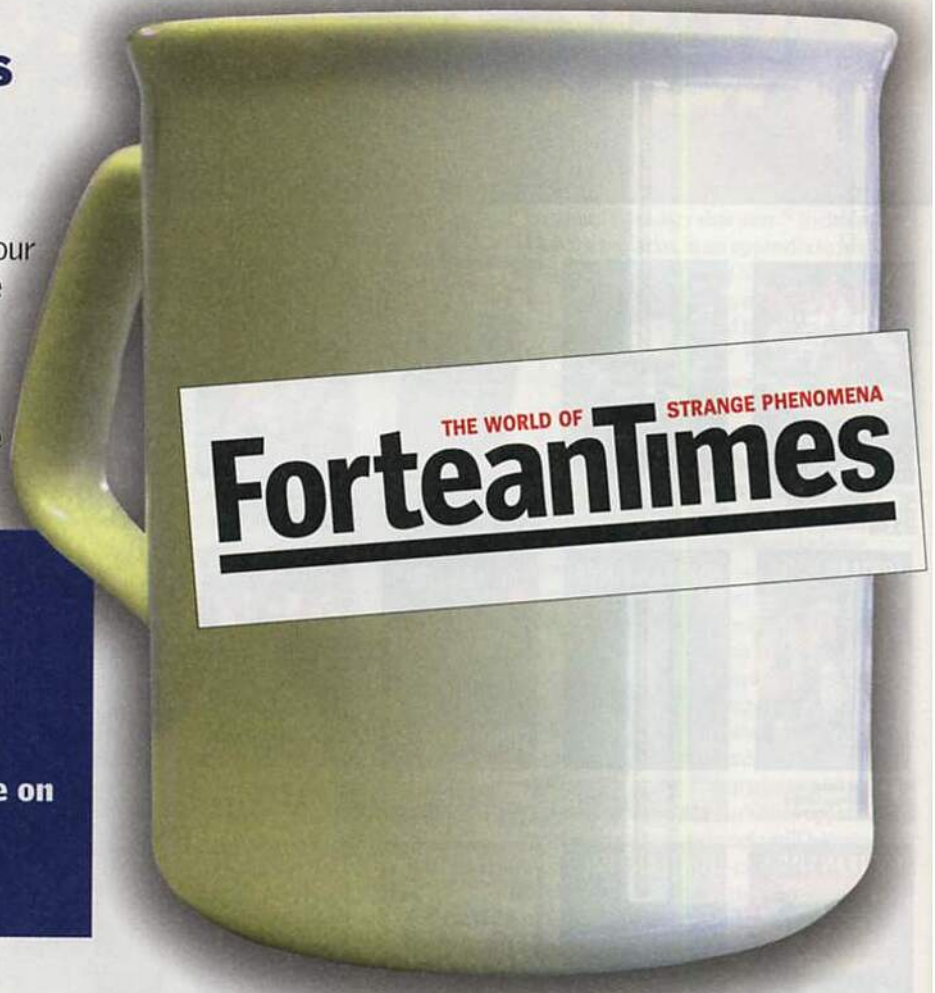

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Doubly damned

THEO PAIJMANS came across a tantalising fragment of Fort's correspondence pasted in a first edition of *Lo!*

THEO PAIJMANS lives in Amsterdam where he pursues his fortean researches by night. During the day he edits a Dutch PC games magazine.

During the course of the publication of his *Book of the Damned*, *New Lands*, *Lo!*, *Wild Talents* and Charles Fort wrote many letters and received a great number from readers, fellow authors and others. These letters would have made a fascinating collection, were it not that Fort's correspondence became scattered after his death in 1932. In the course of his researches into Fort's œuvre, Fortean researcher Mr X managed to locate several disparate collections of the letters. Anna Fort apparently gave many of them to Tiffany Thayer and Theodore Dreiser after Fort's death. Fort had wanted his letters to be made available to forteans once he had passed away, and today we can find a number of these transcribed on Mr X's website. [1]

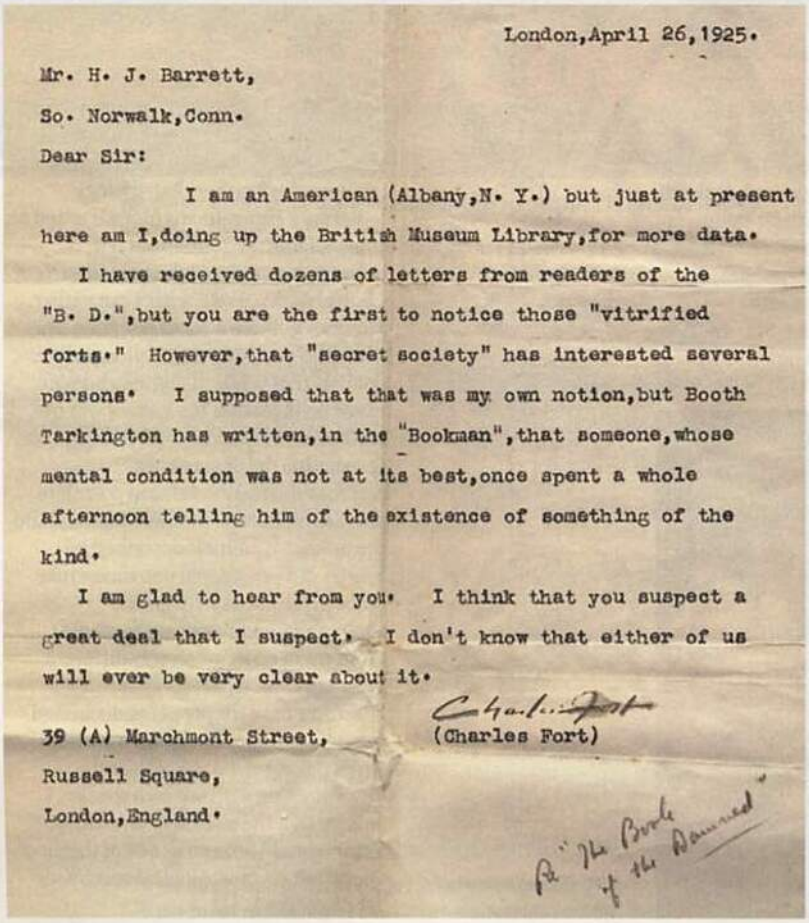
Fort spent many years delving into obscure periodicals, newspapers and scientific journals in various libraries, but his researches did not end with the collecting of data alone. He also made efforts to probe deeper into reported events by writing letters to newspapers or to the principal witnesses identified in a newspaper article. For instance, while living in London, Fort investigated the report of a fall of fish in Canada, which was published in the *Toronto Daily Star* of 27 February 1926. Fort wrote to the newspaper and, as a result, editorials appeared in its pages on 16 and 20 March. [2] When he found a report about a butterfly that was sighted regularly for 16 years at a Girls' National School at Whittlesey, Fort wrote to the school to obtain a confirmation of the butterfly's appearance. [3] By writing to alleged witnesses, Fort came to the conclusion that, quite often, these witnesses simply did not exist: "I have had an extensive, though one-sided, correspondence, with people who may not be, about things that probably aren't." [4]

ABOVE: Fort was a keen letter writer.

We know something of what Fort's letters were like from author Miriam Allen de Ford, who reported a mysterious fall of stones: "The questions Fort asked me and the care he took in getting details straight taught me something of his obstinate search for verification – a search so intensive that for several years it cost him his sight", she wrote. [5] Letters and clippings were sent to him by readers after the publication of *The Book of the Damned* and throughout the rest of his career, [6] and recent years have seen the publication of other parts of his correspondence [7].

Notwithstanding the extensive nature of his correspondence, any new discovery of letters by Fort, and especially those written to him, is a rare occurrence. Not long ago, two of these letters surfaced, pasted in a first US edition of *Lo!*. One was written by the owner of the book, the other was Fort's reply. The owner, one H J Barrett from Norwalk, Connecticut, wrote to Fort care of his publisher, on 10 April 1925. The publisher dutifully sent the letter to London, where Fort was living at that time. Fort's reply is dated 26 April 1925. It is not known if Barrett sent Fort more letters, but circumstances – of which more later – indicate that he may well have done so. I have been unable to find biographical data on H J Barrett. [8] Perhaps 'he' was a 'she', as the letter's writer signed the name as 'HJBVB', the second set of initials perhaps being a married surname. We are left to speculate and study the contents of the letters.

References in Barrett's letter to obscure esoteric publications, such as *Revue Cosmique* [9] and *Pistis Sofia*, and to occultists such as Peter Davidson [10] and Mary Baker Eddy point towards a more than cursory interest in the occult and ritual magic. Perhaps we should let the



London, April 26, 1925.

Mr. H. J. Barrett,
So. Norwalk, Conn.
Dear Sir:

I am an American (Albany, N. Y.) but just at present here am I, doing up the British Museum Library, for more data.

I have received dozens of letters from readers of the "B. D.", but you are the first to notice those "vitrified forts." However, that "secret society" has interested several persons. I supposed that that was my own notion, but Booth Tarkington has written, in the "Bookman", that someone, whose mental condition was not at its best, once spent a whole afternoon telling him of the existence of something of the kind.

I am glad to hear from you. I think that you suspect a great deal that I suspect. I don't know that either of us will ever be very clear about it.

Charles Fort
(Charles Fort)

39 (A) Marchmont Street,
Russell Square,
London, England.

re "The Book of the Damned"

What happened 21 years before Barrett wrote that cryptic note in the book?

Starchild: Another view

An explanation for the 'Starchild Skull' may lie in the realm of cryptozoology rather than ufology, argues JON DOWNES

JON DOWNES is the director of the Centre for Fortean Zoology. He lives in Exeter with his adopted daughter and an ever-shifting population of exotic reptiles.

I read Noel Rooney's account of Lloyd Pye's London visit (**FT173:34-35**) with great interest. I first met Lloyd Pye and examined the so-called 'Starchild Skull' in Nevada during the summer of 1999. Handling it, I was convinced that it was a remarkable specimen, and furthermore one of great importance. However, although I have the greatest respect for Lloyd, I believe that he is barking completely up the wrong tree. I find the theories of Zecharia Sitchin to be dubious in the extreme, but even if you take away all the *Chariots Of the Gods* elements from the 'Starchild Skull', you're left with an extraordinary piece of zoo-fortean evidence.

But evidence of what?

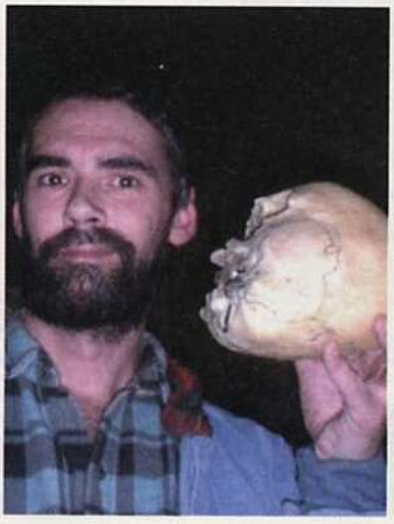
Those who don't agree with Lloyd's theory (that the skull is an alien human hybrid) suggest we could be looking at the result of one of the more debilitating chromosomal disorders found in human children.

I am in the possibly unique position of not only being a cryptozoologist but also of having studied the various genetic syndromes that cause physical and mental handicap in human beings. Many moons ago, I trained as a nurse for what were then called the 'mentally subnormal'. I believe, in these more enlightened days, that such training now focuses upon care and treatment, but 20 years ago, along with my fellow students, I was marched around various wards at Starcross Hospital to examine people who were suffering from a wide range of chromosomal abnormalities. Because of advances in medical knowledge over the past half-century, many of these syndromes are now extinct, especially in the Western world.

It took only a cursory examination of the 'starchild skull' to rule out the theory that it was the result of such a syndrome. If you examine the skulls of people suffering from such conditions as Down's syndrome, Sturge Weber's Syndrome, Laurenz Moon-Beidl Syndrome and the like, two things are immediately obvious. The first is that there are only a relatively small number of differences between these skulls and those of a normal human being. The second is that what differences there are can immediately be perceived as 'mistakes'. The skull of a person with such a condition is, without exception, misshapen and obviously 'wrong'.

If you examine the "Starchild Skull", you can see that is not a case of a few obvious aberrations from the basic human 'template'. There are dozens of major differences – and none of them give the skull a misshapen look. It is symmetrical, and appears to be perfectly designed. But designed for what?

In the known syndromes, such as those mentioned above, there are far more differences from the norm in the soft tissues of the body than in the skeleton. One has to assume that the same would have been the case with the 'Starchild'. It is a truism of human genetic abnormalities that the further away from the basic human 'template' the individual is, as a result of abnormality, the shorter the lifespan of that individual. Lloyd Pye has proved that whatever the 'Starchild' was, it certainly did not die in infancy. Even if by some extraordinary accident of genetics a human baby was born with such an enormous number of differences from the 'template', it is inconceivable that it could survive for any length of time.



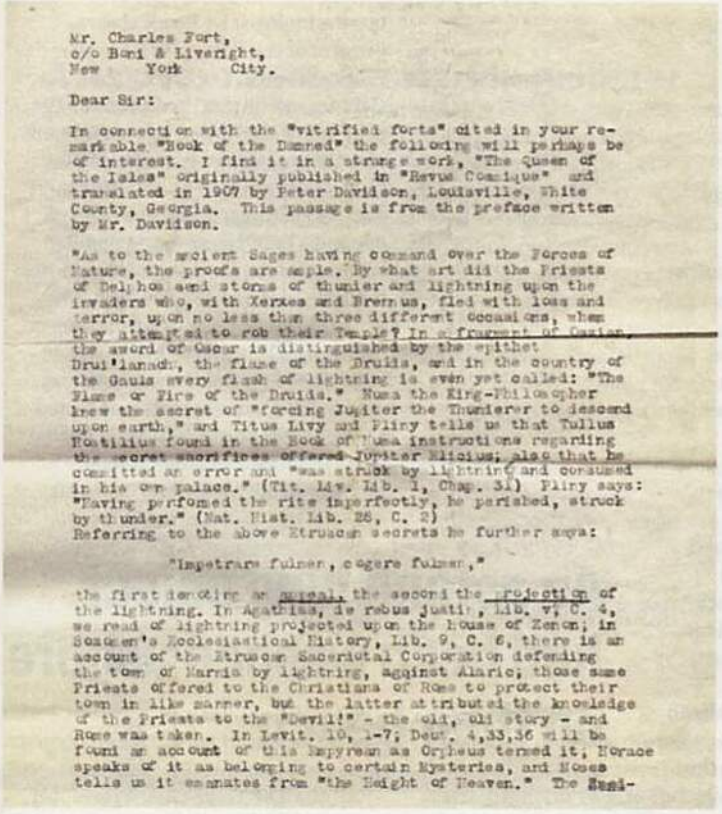
LEFT: Graham Inglis with the 'Starchild Skull'.

Although I had already seen Lloyd lecture in Nevada, I took Richard Freeman and Graham Inglis of the CFZ along to see his lecture in Glastonbury. Like me they were unconvinced by Lloyd's explanation for this extraordinary specimen, but like me they agreed that it was worthy of further investigation.

A few days later, Richard Freeman told me about ancient Mexican legends of small dwarf-like creatures said to live in caves in the more remote parts of the country. In his book *The Humanoids* (1969), Charles Bowen describes modern-day encounters with such creatures across South and Central America. Although some commentators believe that these creatures are aliens, others – myself included – have suggested that they are more likely to be an unknown species of primate. We are in the realm of cryptozoology rather than ufology.

Bernard Heuvelmans himself noted a considerable degree of interaction between humans and the hairy dwarfs of Central Africa. From what I can gather, Mexican folklore alleges the same. The 'starchild skull' was found alongside another that was indisputably human. Lloyd believes that the human was the mother of the 'starchild'. If, however, we re-examine the case using a cryptozoological model, and postulate that an interaction between humans and the unknown animals described by Bowen, did – at least at one time – take place in the cave systems near Chihuahua, Mexico, then the whole affair takes on a completely different meaning.

Rather than simply being dismissed because one does not believe in alien Greys paying visits to Earth and interbreeding with our own species, I believe that the so-called "Starchild-Skull" should be seen as one of the most important cryptozoological specimens yet discovered. FT



Mr. Charles Fort,
c/o Boni & Liveright,
New York City.

Dear Sir:

In connection with the "vitrified forts" cited in your remarkable "Book of the Damned" the following will perhaps be of interest. I find it in a strange work, "The Queen of the Isles" originally published in "Revue Comique" and translated in 1907 by Peter Davidson, Louisville, White County, Georgia. This passage is from the preface written by Mr. Davidson.

"As to the ancient Sages having command over the Forces of Nature, the proofs are ample. By what art did the Priests of Delphos send storms of thunder and lightning upon the invaders who, with Xerxes and Brennus, fled with loss and terror, upon no less than three different occasions, when they attempted to rob their Temple? In a fragment of Caesar, the sword of Oscar is distinguished by the epithet Drui'lanadh, the flame of the Druids, and in the country of the Gauls every flash of lightning is even yet called: "The Flame or Fire of the Druids." Numa the King-Philosopher knew the secret of "forcing Jupiter the Thunderer to descend upon earth," and Titus Livy and Pliny tells us that Tullus Hostilius found in the Book of Numa instructions regarding the secret sacrifices offered Jupiter Elicius; also that he committed an error and "was struck by lightning and consumed in his own palace." (Tit. Liv. Lib. 1, Chap. 31) Pliny says: "Having performed the rite imperfectly, he perished, struck by thunder." (Nat. Hist. Lib. 28, C. 2)
Referring to the above Etruscan secrets he further says:

"Impetrare fulmen, cogere fulmen,"

the first denoting an augral, the second the projection of the lightning. In Agathias, de rebus justin., Lib. v, C. 4, we read of lightning projected upon the house of Zenon; in Sozomen's Ecclesiastical History, Lib. 9, C. 6, there is an account of the Etruscan Sacerdotal Corporation defending the town of Narnia by lightning, against Alaric; those same Priests offered to the Christians of Rome to protect their town in like manner, but the latter attributed the knowledge of the Priests to the "Devil!" - the old, old story - and Rome was taken. In Levit. 10, 1-7; Deut. 4,33,36 will be found an account of this empyreum as Orpheus termed it; Horace speaks of it as belonging to certain Mysteries, and Moses tells us it emanates from "the Height of Heaven." The Zend-Avesta says: "Evoke and comprehend the Celestial Fire" and the Oupekhat adds: "To know the real nature of Fire, of the Light of the Sun, of Magnetism, and the Moon, the Atmosphere and Telluric Electricity, is three-fourths of the Science of the Magi. Servius says: "the ancient Priests never lighted a fire upon their altars - their sacred prayers brought down and made appear the Fire of Heaven."

From now on, I suppose, all phenomena such as that listed in your book will be doubly damned inasmuch as the instant assumption will be that the matter dropped from an airplane or dirigible. Still, the plane may eventually confirm your hypotheses through penetrating beyond the belt of gravitation.

I think that you deserve the thanks of the community for your contribution to progress. Even though your book may find but a limited public today, I can visualize its being unearthed centuries hence, reprinted and acclaimed, like, for example, "The Pistis Sophia" as an epoch-making volume.

I was interested in your postulation of a secret order in communication with other spheres and wondered if there were any connection between the fact that messages seem to be regularly received in Galicia and its comparative proximity to Vienna, reputed to be the European center for the Black Brotherhood, an esoteric and occult order of Jesuits whose Western headquarters are said to be in Quebec. I have a hunch that Quebec will bear watching. Earthquakes have been so frequent in Northern Quebec for the past few months that Woodsmen, trappers, etc., have all left the country.

Well, as George M. Cohan remarked to Mary Baker Eddy that day they spent together at Luna Park, "There are more things in heaven and earth, etc."

Very truly yours,

April the tenth,
Nineteen Twenty-five.

NJB-VB

exchange between Barrett and Fort speak for itself, as the two letters offer more than enough interesting materials to ponder, upon such matters as vitrified forts or Barrett's thoughts on the existence of a secret Black Occult Order and its possible correlation with distant earthquakes.

There remains one sinister aspect to the whole case. Dealing with antiquarian fortean books, magazines and documents often throws up the most wonderful little surprises. Pasted-in newspaper clippings of strange events, underlinings and marginal annotations, all yield glimpses of a fascinating fortean mindscape that is not to be found in the text books on the history of ideas.

When I studied these documents, I also examined the first edition of *Lo!* 1931 carefully. I was not disappointed.

On page 90, Fort writes of an incident of a girl who disappeared "somewhere in New York City" on 12 December 1910: "The only known man in her affairs lived in Italy. It looks as if she had no intention of disappearing; she was arranging for a party, a tea, whatever those things are, for about sixty of her former schoolmates, to be held upon the 17th of that month. When last seen, in Fifth Avenue, she said that she intended to walk through Central Park, on her way to her home, near the 79th Street entrance of the park. It may be that somewhere in the eastern part of the park, between the 59th Street and the 79th Street entrances, she disappeared. No more is known of Dorothy Arnold." Next to this passage in the margin of the page, is scribbled in pencil, in all probability by Barrett: "she took a train for (illegible – to? From?) Philadelphia. I was asked to party!" Throughout the book, it is the only annotation. What had happened some 21 years before Barrett scribbled that cryptic note in the book? Was it a case of murder most foul? Are Barrett's occult interests of any relevance? Is there any occult clue as to Arnold's disappearance?[11] Or is this a case of tragic fortean coincidence? And did Barrett send any further letters to Fort?

We may never know. FT

NOTES

1 www.resologist.net/corres00.htm Add to this the reference on p170 of Damon Knight's biography of Fort to a letter from Fort to Dreiser in the University of Pennsylvania Library. Knight also offers other examples of Fort's correspondence.

2 www.resologist.net/art02.htm also Magin, page 154

3 *Lo!*, p89: "I wrote to Mrs. Clarke, one of the teachers, and she replied, verifying the story, in general, though not vouching for an appearance every one of the sixteen years. I kept track, and wrote again, early in 1928..."

4 *Lo!*, page 103

5 Knight p171, citing Miriam Allen de Ford: "Charles Fort, Enfant terrible of Science", *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, January 1954.

6 Fort mentions these senders: Maynard Shipley sent Fort clippings of falling stones (*New Lands*, page 244), Miriam Allen de Ford sent Fort an account of her observations of falling rocks (*New Lands*, page 245), Mrs. Margaret McDonald of Hawthorne, Mass sent an account of many speckled snakes (*Lo!*, page 81), Miss F G Talman of Woodbury, NJ sent a clipping (*Lo!* p103). Shipley and de Ford were married. Shipley corresponded with Fort in the 1920s and 30s, as did science fiction writer Edmond Hamilton. See Knight, pp170-171.

7 Mr X, 'The Charles Fort - John Reid Correspondence', *INFO Journal* 71, Autumn 1994.

8 Although there are 10 Barretts listed in the Norwalk, Connecticut City Directory for 1925 there is no H J among them. www.distantcousin.com/Directories/CT/Norwalk/1925/Page.asp?Page=065 A search on the genealogy databases yielded no further information on H J Barrett, although there was an H J Barrett in Connecticut who was married to a Sarah Jane Hutchins.

9 Founded in Paris by F Ch Barlet in 1901. In 1904 Max Théon, founder of the Cosmic Movement, and member of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, became the official editor. *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor*, Joscelyn Godwin, Christian Chanel, John P Deveney, Weiser Books, 1995, page 31.

10 Violin maker Peter Davidson (1837-1915), lived near Findhorn at one time. He later emigrated to Georgia, USA where he died. Davidson was in contact with "people in the thick of the London occultist scene, members of the Rosicrucia in Anglia, of fringe Masonic groups, experimenters with magic mirrors etc." See: *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor*, Joscelyn Godwin, Christian Chanel, John P Deveney, Weiser Books, 1995. Citation in this note taken from page 22.

11 Fort writes how a swan was found at the location of where Dorothy Arnold disappeared – remarkable, because no swan had appeared in Central park previously.

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Charles Fort, *Lo!*, 1931

Damon Knight, *Charles Fort, Prophet of the Unexplained*, 1970

Ulrich Magin, *Der Ritt auf den Kometen, über Charles Fort*, 1997

The Chilean globster

KARL SHUKER finds that even the most disappointing cryptozoological cases can yield some genuine insights

KARL SHUKER is a zoologist, lecturer and regular contributor to Fortean Times. His most recent book was The New Zoo (2002).

On 23 June 2003, villagers at Los Muermos, near the city of Puerto Montt, southern Chile, were bewildered by the sight of an astonishing object that had been washed ashore on their beach. Later described, rather memorably, in some news reports as resembling a squashed elephant, it was basically an amorphous gelatinous 'blob', grey and pink in colour and of leathery texture, but of stupendous, ultra-elephantine dimensions. It was roughly 40ft (12m) long, 18ft (5.4m) wide, 3ft (90cm) tall at its highest point, and estimated to weigh over a ton. Members of the Chilean navy examined it, and also revealed the presence nearby of a second object, though this was readily identifiable as a dead humpback whale. As for the 'blob', conversely, the only objects that it resembled in any way were the various enigmatic 'globsters' that have been discovered over the years washed ashore on a number of far-flung beaches, in such localities as Tasmania, Newfoundland, New Zealand, Bermuda, and – most famously, in 1896 – Florida.

By the beginning of July, the Chilean globster was attracting headlines worldwide, due in no small way to the optimism of its chief publicist, Chilean marine biologist Dr Elsa Cabrera, director of the Centre for Cetacean Conservation in Santiago. For Dr Cabrera lost no time in dismissing the prospect of the Chilean globster being of cetacean (whale) origin, instead boldly favouring the possibility that it was the earthly remains of a colossal octopus – thereby echoing a popular identity for the Florida globster of 1896 (which had even been assigned the scientific name *Octopus giganteus*) – or even a wholly novel, hitherto unrecorded type of marine organism. And indeed, some reports mentioned the apparent presence of what looked like a tentacle amid the Chilean globster's gelatinous form. She also

An astonishing object had been washed ashore on their beach

JOSE LUIS SAAVEDRA / REUTERS

A new home for the Florida globster

– or what's left of it. Since it was washed ashore in Florida during 1896, tissue samples taken from this anomalous object, allegedly the remains of a colossal octopus, have been subjected to many examinations in an attempt to determine its zoological identity, with conflicting results. Moreover, most of the samples have ultimately been lost or discarded – an all-too-common (and frustrating) occurrence long associated with cryptozoological specimens. Hence it is important to keep up to date our records of the whereabouts of any such specimens that do still survive – and these include some samples of the Florida globster analysed by veteran cryptozoologist Prof. Roy P Mackal. Thus, as now revealed by Bill Gibbons, Prof. Mackal has recently donated these precious remains to the Institute of Creation Research in El Cajon, California, where they have been received by the Institute's biology professor, Dr Kenneth Cummings. *Bill Gibbons, cryptolist@yahoogroups.com 29 June 2003.*

The term 'globster' was coined by zoologist Ivan Sanderson following the discovery of a strange object, 18ft (5.4m) by 20ft (6m), apparently covered with 'short soft hair', washed up on Tasmania's west coast in 1960. Imaginative suggestions as to its identity ranged from a thawed-out 'prehistoric monster' to the body of a 'space being'.

For a full survey, see the chapter on globsters in *Living Wonders* by John Michell and Bob Rickard (Thames & Hudson 1982).

FORTEAN PICTURE LIBRARY

claimed that it did not have the correct texture or smell to be from a whale.

Not everyone, however, shared Cabrera's views. Dr Steve Webster, senior marine biologist at California's Monterey Bay Aquarium, believed it more likely that the globster was a greatly decomposed whale skin, noting that much of the length of an octopus (and giant squid) is accounted for by its tentacles, not its body. Dr James Mead, a Smithsonian Institution zoologist, also supported a whale identity, as did marine biologist Dr Sidney Pierce from the University of South Florida, and geneticist Dr Steven M Carr from the Memorial University of Newfoundland. Dr Carr's views were particularly pertinent, as he has become something of an expert at debunking sea monster carcases by virtue of DNA analyses devised by him that have categorically unmasked a number of previous globsters as whale blubber.

Dr Sergio Letelier, a researcher at Santiago's Museum of Natural History, pointed out that the Florida globster did not smell like an octopus. This is significant, because rotting octopuses and squids release ammonia, thereby giving off the pungent smell of a cat litter box, whereas a decomposing whale smells like rotting meat.

Accordingly, plans were made by Cabrera's team to send tissue samples from the Chilean globster to at least five different laboratories worldwide for DNA tests to settle the matter of its identity once and for all. As it happened, however, the answer came before any of these tests were even carried out. On 11 July, Dr Letelier and colleague Dr Jose Yanez announced that they had uncovered and conclusively identified within the globster's jelly-like mass the spermaceti organ of a sperm whale. This extraordinary structure is peculiar to sperm whales, occupies much of their greatly enlarged forehead, and contains a milky fluid.

But how could a decomposed sperm whale be mistaken for a giant octopus? There is a notable precedent for such dramatic misidentification when dealing with beached remains, which is known as the pseudoplesiosaur effect. When a basking shark dies and its body decomposes, it undergoes a remarkable transformation. The gill apparatus falls away, taking with it the jaws, leaving only its small cranium and exposed backbone, thus resembling a small head and long neck. The end of the shark's backbone only runs into the upper fluke of its tail, so during decomposition the lower fluke falls off, leaving what looks like a long slender tail. And to complete the plesiosaur deception, the shark's pectoral fins, and sometimes its pelvic fins too, remain attached, resembling two pairs of flippers. Little wonder, therefore, that a number of amazingly plesiosaurian carcases have been reported over the years, only for anatomical and biochemical analyses to expose them as sharks.

Now, moreover, we have confirmation that an analogous transformation is responsible for at least some of the hitherto perplexing globsters that have come to light – a transformation that I propose should hereafter be referred to as the quasi-octopus effect. As detailed by Drs Pierce, Carr, and Letelier, after a whale dies its body can float for months, decomposing, until eventually its heavy backbone and skull dissociate from their encompassing skin-sac of rotting blubber, and sink to the sea bottom, leaving behind a thick gelatinous matrix of collagen – the tough protein found in skin and connective tissue. It is this mass of collagen that washes ashore, as a globster. Furthermore, if a few of the whale's ribs remain within the collagen matrix, and any 'fingers' of fibrous flesh are attached to them, these resemble tentacles. And if the whale is a sperm whale, the spermaceti organ gives the resulting globster a bulky shape reminiscent of an octopus.

All of which explains how a rotting whale can metamorphose with ease into a giant octopus – usually, that is. There is still the case of the Florida globster – some tests on samples of its remains having uncovered distinct biochemical similarities with octopus tissue. For its supporters, therefore, the quasi-octopus effect is not an option. As for other globsters, conversely: no use blubbing over stranded blobs (of blubber). Just pity whoever is given the job of removing the Chilean globster and clearing up the beach afterwards! FT

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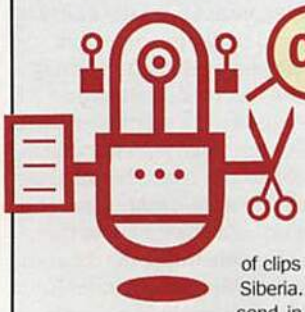

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Why Fortean?

Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874-1932). Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data was ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown. From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Elsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox. **FT** toes no party line.

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reviews

At long last, the kraken wakes

The long-awaited second volume of Bernard Heuvelmans' collected works has finally been published – good news for English speaking cryptozoologists!

The Kraken and the Colossal Octopus

Bernard Heuvelmans

Kegan Paul (www.keganpaul.com), 2003
HB £85, 330pp, bib, notes, 148 plates, ISBN: 710308701

News of the publication of this second volume in Kegan Paul's projected series collecting the works of Dr Bernard Heuvelmans will be welcomed by lovers of 'undiscovered animals' and 'fortean zoology' everywhere – especially those who have kept faith for eight years since the first volume (*On the track of unknown animals*, reviewed in ***FT86:57***) launched the series in 1995.

Heuvelmans (1916–2001) is widely regarded as 'the father of cryptozoology'; his hefty and detailed books pioneered the systematic study of animals new, or even unknown, to science and, through a lifetime of collecting data both in libraries and in the field, he explored many of the regions where 'legendary' animals lurk, and attempted to bring them within the purview of scientific zoology. At the same time, he pulled off the feat of writing about the serious study of mystery animals in a way that was accessible to all.

At his death in August 2001, his huge archive was relocated to Switzerland's Museum of Zoology in Lausanne and a blow was dealt to the publisher's plans for the 'collected works'. Although Heuvelmans could write in better English than many of today's natives, he insisted on fresh translations of his books. The series for Kegan Paul presented an opportunity to oversee the quality of his details and intentions and to restore the original works to their full extent. Alas, even while his health was failing, his trusted translator Richard Garnett died and recovery of the papers of the work in progress from Garnett's estate proved long and difficult. Further delays ensued as Kegan Paul sought a new translator. The appearance of this volume is a welcome sign that all these problems have been resolved.

In the wake of the sea-serpents, the second of Heuvelmans' works to be translated into English, first appeared in 1968 and was quickly recognised for the scope of its research and its authoritative analysis and opinions. It was a best-seller for many years and set the standard for every book on the unknown animals of the sea which would follow.

However, it was a monster itself (nearly 650 pages), assembled from parts of several earlier books that had never before been translated out of French. While the main part of the book was a heavily abridged and revised version of *Le grand serpent-de-mer* (1965), its large second chapter, on giant squids and octopuses, was cut-down from an entire book – *Le kraken et le poulpe colossal* (1958). The volume in review here focuses on the identity of the legendary kraken and other tentacled marine monsters, restoring the 'lost' nine-tenths of the original book, and leaving the topic of sea-serpents to its own, future volume.

With the luxury of space to indulge his curiosity, Heuvelmans begins, as you'd expect, with the early evidence of squids and octopuses, how they entered the general cultural awareness in the classical past, in medieval times and during the 18th century 'Age of Reason', providing the foundation of the study in terms of its images and legends, early zoology and nomenclature. The weirdness of squids and octopuses kicks in with Chapter 2, which is a wonderfully fortean essay on octopus behaviour, which undoubtedly contributed to legends of its size and aggression. Now in his stride, Heuvelmans devotes heavy chapters to the astonishing varieties of cephalopod types and the mediæval legend of beasts so huge they were mistaken for islands.

There were legends of beasts so huge they were mistaken for islands

The main part of the book turns the focus on squids, devoting a whole section each on the identity of the legendary Kraken and the giant squids, beasts big enough to leave their tentacle marks and claws (mistaken for teeth) in the bodies of huge whales. Nearly all the questions we still ask today about such monsters were debated by the early pioneers of marine biology, including the Norwegian bishop Pontoppidan, the map-maker Olaus Magnus, and the systematiser Linnæus, from whose accumulation of lore and fact the serious study took off.

One Frenchman stands out as Heuvelmans' particular hero: Pierre Denys de Montfort (b.1764), who risked his reputation as a naturalist by describing giant squids in his *Histoire naturelle de mollusques* (1802). He was inspired by a description from 1783 of an eight-metre long tentacle found in the mouth of a sperm whale, and it was clear this was only part of the whole arm. By including in his book the now famous *ex voto* image of a monstrous cephalopod attacking a ship (from the church in St Malo), Denys-Montfort endured years of ridicule from his academic peers.

The final chapters bring the whole subject up to date with the study of previously unknown species of giant squid, such as *Architeuthis* – the discovery of which vindicated Denys-Montfort – and the more uncertain evidence for giant octopuses with its profusion of tantalising carcase fragments found on beaches, in nets and in the stomachs of huge whales.

Given the importance and monster-sized price of this volume, it is all the more regrettable that it lacks an introduction and a preface (noting the differences between this and earlier versions); nor do the impressive 49-page bibliography and footnotes make up for the lack of an index, essential to a work of this calibre. Nevertheless, it comes highly recommended to scholars and beginners alike as a solid foundation to a fascinating subject. This long-awaited volume may satisfy the appetite for more of Heuvelmans' works, but such is the man's domination of cryptozoology's chief topics that we all sincerely hope the wait for the next volume – whether it be sea-serpents, the yeti, or dinosaur survivals – will not be so excruciating.

Bob Rickard

Fortean Times Verdict

AN ESSENTIAL WORK LET DOWN BY LACK OF AN INDEX **9**

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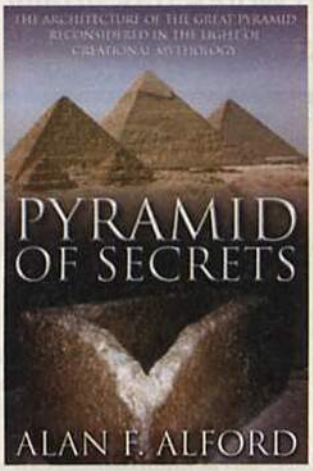
A tomb with a view

A persuasive demolition of 'solar cult' orthodoxy suggests the pyramids symbolise the Egyptians' understanding of a creation story


THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE GREAT PYRAMID RECONSIDERED IN THE LIGHT OF CREATIONAL MYTHOLOGY
PYRAMID OF SECRETS
ALAN F. ALFORD

Pyramid of Secrets

Alan F Alford

Eridu Books, 2003
Pb, 440pp, ind, notes, illus, £18.00, ISBN 0 9527994 2 1

This is a fascinating book, not least because it manages to offer new, and potentially exciting, ideas about the Great Pyramid, from outside the mainstream, without recourse to the 'Freddie Starr ate my hamster' school of Egyptology. Alford's central thesis recasts both the monument, and the religious outlook which gave rise to it, in the light of creational mythology.

The arguments for the creational view are largely summaries (a book on precisely this subject is due out early next year), but they are cogent, and fit the scriptural evidence very well. His demolition of the 'solar cult' theorising of orthodox Egyptology is more comprehensive and ought, in an objective world, to be fatal (needless to say, we do not live in such a world, and I wonder if the mainstream will actually engage with Alford's ideas; it would be an instructive encounter if it came about).

Alford also neatly disposes of the 'tomb and tomb only' view, mainly by the simple and effective tactic of setting out the archæological and cultural evidence which undermines it. At the same time, he (unlike the majority of alternative researchers) is happy to accept the work of mainstream scholars where it fits the evidence – Lepre and Petrie are both given the respect they deserve for their assiduous and largely unbiased investigations.

Having cleared the ground for informed speculation, Alford proposes a number of interesting possibilities for the pyramid, in terms of its construction and its religious significance. The pyramid, he suggests, is a symbol of the creation story as the Egyptians understood it; not some crusty and ill-conceived 'primitive' myth, but a rational, if geocentric, explanation of the beginnings of life on Earth. Meteorites are pivotal to this worldview, and Alford makes a very good case for their centrality in ancient Egypt in general, and the great pyramid in particular.

His suggestions for the acoustic properties of the internal chambers (focusing on the curious arrangement above the King's Chamber) make sense of a good deal of otherwise anomalous construction. He is almost certainly right to suggest that we have not yet found all the chambers in the pyramid (actually we have never really looked properly; most of our discoveries have been accidental); and his proposal for what we might find at the end of the small shafts in the Queen's Chamber is very persuasive.

Less persuasive is his reading of the importance of cataclysms in the origins and the teleology of the pyramids. Intuitively I tend to agree with him; but there is not enough hard evidence in the book to justify the intuition; this is a pity, as the creational ethos, and the meteoritic cult, would only gain from a more thorough exposition of the cataclysmic worldview.

His suggestion that the pyramid is a sort of time capsule is not entirely backed up by the evidence. This is not Alford's fault; most of the evidence which might prove or disprove it has been removed, at least from the chambers we know about. I found myself wondering why the Great Pyramid should uniquely serve this purpose, and wanted to see more on the function of other pyramids to support it. I also think that the notion of a sealed repository may be independent of the time capsule idea.

And while I'm picking small nits, I was a tad irritated by the self-conscious legalisms ("the said monument") and the gentlemanly anachronisms which litter the text ("if the reader will indulge me" appears dozens of times). But these are mere details in a book which stands well against the very best work produced by the acknowledged experts.

At the end of the book, Alford acknowledges his debt to both von Däniken and Sitchin. This is brave and honest (though unlikely to endear him to orthodoxy); most of us with an interest in the anomalies of Egyptian archæology came to it by a similar route. It also serves to highlight how far Alford has moved on from the occasionally fanciful speculations of *Gods of the New Millennium* – to a beautifully researched, thoughtful, and thought-provoking study of a monument which has resisted all definitions of it for the best part of five thousand years.

Noel Rooney

Fortean Times Verdict
PERSUASIVE AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING DEMOLITION JOB **8**

The devil in the White City

Erik Larson

Transworld Publishers, 2003
Hb, 390pp, notes, illus, £12.99, ISBN 0385602057

This should be a fascinating book. HH Holmes, the Devil in question, was an early American serial killer whose real name was Herman Webster Mudgett and whose MO overlapped that of several other killers both before and since.

Holmes/Mudgett is popularly alleged to have murdered 150 young women "paying guests" at his home on 63rd Street, Chicago, Illinois. Most were apparently dispatched in a gas-filled trunk, as he carefully timed their asphyxia on his pocket watch. Yet his criminal career reflected many others.

For a start, there were the equally lethal if semi-mythical "bloody Benders" who ran a hostelry in 1870s Kansas. Another of Holmes' practices included the sale of a perfectly articulated human skeleton, echoing the exploits of the 1820s Edinburgh body-snatchers Burke and Hare. He also had an acid bath for ease of disposal, just like the 1940s UK villain John George Haigh.

In spite of all this, Holmes/Mudgett was hanged on 7 May1896 for the murder of his business partner, Benjamin F Pitezel. This book fails to explain why such a prolific serial killer came to such a minor fate. I have learned more about Holmes and his crimes from shorter accounts in other books.

The murders were carried out at Holmes' "castle" on 63rd Street, Chicago. Modern geographical profilers would no doubt be fascinated by this! A suspicious fire on 22 November 1893 led to a police search of the premises, and to his eventual arrest.

The book's narrative is set against the background of Chicago's 1893 World Fair, which was in competition with one in New York. The Chicago Fair, in co-celebration of the 400th Anniversary of Columbus' landing in America, introduced Ferris Wheels and Shredded Wheat to the world. The property developments cleared for the waterfront Chicago Fair – the "White City" of the title – are strewn along Lake Michigan. A frontispiece

map of Chicago in 1891, showing the future World's Fair Grounds, fails to pick out 63rd Street. We are left mystified as to why HH Holmes was allowed to call himself "doctor."

In short, this book is under-illustrated, under-explained and over-long for a definitive study of a classic American serial murderer.

Nick Warren

Fortean Times Verdict
NOT THE DEFINITIVE ACCOUNT OF AN ENIGMATIC MURDERER **6**

A Fête worse than Death

Iain Aitch

Headline, 2003
Hb, £14.99, 288pp, ISBN 0755311906

Taking the premise that he's just as likely to find himself on a tour of our own occasionally green and pleasant land as he is on a pilgrimage to India, Iain Aitch sets off to bask in the manifold delights of an English country summer. Bravely, or perhaps foolishly, Aitch opts to use public transport wherever possible, the perils of which he takes great pleasure in documenting in minute detail, perhaps influenced by the train- and planespotters he encounters en route. Among other things, Aitch's journey takes in toe wrestling, cheese rolling and the sailing of a giant pasty into Cornwall's Fowey harbour; while of particular fortean interest are his excursions with the ever-reliable Ætherius Society, a night out with the Circlemakers and a Summer Solstice at Stonehenge, neatly summarised as "a piss up in a field."

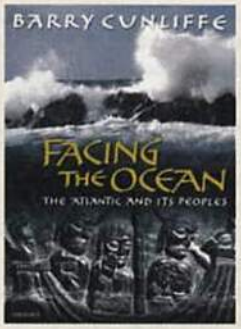
Aitch maintains a somewhat curmudgeonly attitude for much of his adventure, lit by flashes of Hancockian (Tony, not Graham) humour. But, as Aitch grew up in Margate, it's easy enough to understand how the romance of the English summer might be lost on him. Perhaps begrudgingly, Aitch does concede to having enjoyed his tour of duty, and his account makes for a highly enjoyable, if lightweight, summer read.

Mark Pilkington

Fortean Times Verdict
ENJOYABLE ACCOUNT OF AN ACCIDENTAL ENGLISH TOURIST **8**

Faultless littoral history

A magisterial study of the exchange of ideas, goods, animals and people in the Atlantic eastern seaboard over 10 millennia



Facing the Ocean

The Atlantic and its peoples 8000BC–AD1500

Barry Cunliffe

Oxford University Press, 2001
Hb, viii, 600pp. Illus, maps, £25.00, ISBN 0 19924019 1.

This is, I suspect, as close to the definitive overview of this subject as we're going to get. Barry Cunliffe has assembled an outline history of the peoples of the Atlantic eastern seaboard covering nearly 10,000 years. It is excellently presented, with numerous colour illustrations, maps, diagrams and figures as well as a well-measured text.

Cunliffe takes as his starting points what we know about the subject, from the archæological record and documentary sources, assembled from his reading of a wide range of primary materials very neatly discussed in his concluding section "A Guide to further reading". And from there he constructs a coherent story, one which inevitably has to be augmented by reasoned argument and inference but which never strains the bounds of the likely. This is, simply, a very sensible book.

The dominant theme is the continuity of certain themes; in particular, that the western coast of Europe, facing the Atlantic, has been the site of the exchange of ideas, materials, goods, animals and people throughout this period, albeit with apparent lulls in activity and changes in emphasis. In the millennia which cover the building of those enigmatic stone circles, avenues and mounds which litter the landscapes of the countries included in this survey, must have been a time when, despite the difficulties involved, the peoples of western Britain and Ireland were linked to mainland Europe – and in particular to what is now France, Spain and Portugal – by a network of maritime trade routes. Another set of routes linked eastern Britain with the low countries, Germany, Denmark, the Baltic and Scandinavian areas. These, in turn, linked with networks that stretched across Europe by way of the major river routes. This is not to suppose that anyone in Britain and Ireland, for example, would have travelled regularly across western Europe. However, each of the nodes of the network – between which the trade would have been conducted – eventually linked to the others, and goods could end up thousands of miles from their source.

Cunliffe is very good on the voyages of exploration which were a regular feature of this area. As soon as people mastered the arts of sailing, boat-building and navigation, they ventured further than their immediate neighbourhoods, in search of fish (which would eventually take the Bristol fishing fleets to the seas off Newfoundland), solitude (which would send Irish monks off to the Faroes and then Iceland, before the Vikings), pilgrimage (which would see thousands descend on northern Spain from Ireland and Britain in the mediæval period), plunder (too many examples to list!), trade (sometimes peaceful, sometimes as a prelude to plunder) and raw materials (the mineral wealth of Brittany, Ireland, Northern Spain, and south-western Britain was exported to be made into finished goods), even before Roman times, there was thriving trade in the importing of recyclable materials into Britain), settlement (not just the Vikings, Saxons and others but even the British settled in Brittany and Northern Spain). Along with these came new ideas, fashions, religions, marriage partners, alliances, techniques and technologies.

Of course, for the prehistoric period (ie, before recorded history) we cannot tell how far the peoples of the Atlantic seaboard saw themselves as a single people or whether they treated outsiders merely as a means to an end, as totally alien. One suspects that with the volume of trade that we presume was carried out, they must have been, for most of the time, some sort of kindred spirits – trade presumes the ability to communicate and compatible economies. The similarities in the ceremonial architectures employed throughout the region over thousands of years is unlikely to have been pure coincidence, though ideas about the "origins" of the styles and fashions for such monuments change with the advances in dating techniques and the sites being investigated.

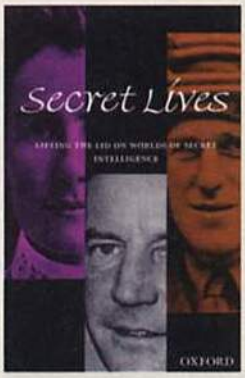
Cunliffe is, quite simply, on top of his subject, and I can recommend this for anyone interested in our origins. I've only touched on the breadth of the topics covered, and the further reading reveals that there is a wealth of materials being published on such matters as boat-building in the pre-Roman period, changes in the fashions of axe designs and sources for the stones used, ceremonial architecture, trade patterns and goods and so forth. If you read no other book on the subject this is the one to go for. And once you've read it, I'll be surprised if you don't delve even further into the subjects covered.

Richard Alexander

Fortean Times Verdict
A HISTORY WHICH REPLACES IGNORANCE WITH ENTHUSIASM **9**

Keeping it in the family

Foot's survey of 500 years of spying and the secret services proves definitively that "military intelligence" is not an oxymoron



Secret Lives

MRD Foot

Oxford University Press, 2002
Pb, 302pp, refs, ind, £10.99, ISBN 0 19 860637 0

"When I was 10," recalls Professor Michael Foot, "I asked my grandfather: 'Is there really a secret service?' He told me that of course there was, and that I must never mention it again." Times have changed, and today intelligence work – although still a murky subject – is not taboo.

Professor Foot (better known as MRD Foot) is largely to thank for this. He is Britain's pre-eminent authority on the matter of secret agents, with a steady stream of books to his name, each setting out chapter and verse on the hidden history of national intelligence. *Secret lives* is the latest of Prof Foot's books, and consists of 100 biographies of spies and intelligence workers, chosen from the multi-authored *Dictionary of National Biography*.

It's impressive in its historical span, covering 500 years, from Guy Fawkes to Lawrence of Arabia.

I met Professor Foot at his home in Nuthampstead near Royston, Hertfordshire. Fit and zestful at 84, and looking many years younger, Professor Foot is an invigorating presence, talking with great fluency and precision, and obviously loving his subject. His sharp and lively mind is reflected in *Secret Lives*: the editing and writing are a joy, and the stop/start sequence of biographies (two or three pages for each) is ideally suited to the subject matter, acting like a series of windows that open briefly to let light in on fascinating details, and then close again.

I asked Prof Foot why he chose to cover such a wide period.

"It's important to show that intelligence work is not some recent occurrence. People tend to lose track of history, especially when so many of the details are so sensitive. But the basic principles of intelligence work have hardly changed for thousands of years. For example, during World War Two, saboteurs on the continent were taught rules for 'scragging' German sentries. Those rules were taken direct from Æneas Tacticus: a Greek, writing in the third century BC – who is still the standard work on the subject!"

Foot is right to remind us of something we tend to forget: that spycraft is intimately connected to warfare. The "MI" in MI5 and MI6 stands for "Military Intelligence." (One often-asked question is "What happened to MIs 1 to 4, and are there any others?" There were originally many MIs, each with specialist areas: for example, MI9 – the subject of one of Foot's previous books – ran the escape lines for POWs during World War Two. Eventually the system was simplified into MI5 for "home" and MI6 for "foreign".)

Spies are like any soldier in that they swear allegiance to the monarch – explaining why so many of the subjects of *Secret Lives* seem to hover around the fringes of royalty. And, like royalty, spycraft tends to be a family business.

"It's logical, if you think about it. Families are an ideal selection device: no-one knows you more closely. For example, the current head of GCHQ [the government's monitoring station] is Francis Richards. In World War Two, his father ran agents into southern France, later he became our ambassador to Athens and advised the Queen on Northern Ireland."

"One of the ancestors of Robert Catesby [a plotter with Guy Fawkes, both of whom appear in *Secret Lives*] had worked for Richard III, 130 years earlier. These things are kept in families." Was Foot motivated by any concerns of openness?

"No. I don't think we should be told exactly what the secret services do. Secret services work much better when they're secret. But that's not to say we can't write the history of what they've done. It's a complex issue, of course." Of course. But this is a fascinating and highly-readable book, full of insight: anyone wanting to know more about the secret services ought to read it. And anyone looking for a reference book on some of the most famous names in intelligence need look no further.

Some entries are even a little contentious, and exhibit selective tendencies: for example, the official finding that Alan Turing committed suicide (in anguish at being victimised over his homosexuality) is roundly pooh-poohed by the author of the *DNB*'s Turing entry, Helen Palmer, who regards it as "possibly an accident." On the other hand, conspiracy theories surrounding the death of Airey Neave are not even examined by John Tilney. Such matters will prove the springboard for individual exploration.

Given the important role that the intelligence services play in our lives today, this book deserves the widest possible readership. When you've read *Secret Lives*, you will be grateful that Professor Foot did not follow his grandfather's advice.

Garrick Alder

Fortean Times Verdict

TRACK THIS BOOK DOWN AND INTERROGATE IT **8**

The Invisible Enemy

A natural history of viruses

Dorothy Crawford

Oxford University Press, 2002
Pb, 284pp, illus, refs, index, gloss, £8.99, ISBN 0 19 856481 3

At one time, say, 30 years ago, flush with the success of smallpox eradication, humanity was confident that it was only a matter of time before all infectious diseases were conquered.

In retrospect, this looks like unforgivable hubris. Evolution has outsmarted us with virulent strains of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, leading to a massive tuberculosis resurgence and the threat of incurable "superbugs". On the other, it has thrown up a range of new and terrifying viruses, of which HIV – the AIDS virus – is only the best known. Viruses are no longer the academic preserve of only medical researchers: they concern us all.

Professor Crawford has put her long experience of working with viruses to good use. *The Invisible Enemy* is accessible to the general reader, accurate and thought-provoking. It is a considered and careful look at the current state of knowledge about viruses and the effects they have on us. Kicking off with a useful introduction to what viruses actually are (something the majority of people seem ignorant of, given the number who hassle doctors for antibiotics – which only kill bacteria – for viral afflictions like flu), how they work, what spreads them and some of the history of their discovery. With the basics established, the book ranges far and wide, looking at viruses in history, and what this has to tell us about their threat today, most notably that we are about due for another 'flu pandemic, not the sort that gets you a day of work with a temperature – the type which kills. She covers Ebola, Hanta virus, herpes, ME, Malaria and other key viruses, and diverges slightly to take in the prions, even more primitive entities than viruses which cause BSE and associated disorders, as well as the more controversial relationship between cancer and viruses. In each case, the behaviour of the virus is put into context with anecdotes of people who have

experienced their infection, fought to develop vaccines or otherwise played a part in the story. This approach makes the book friendly and accessible, without it becoming patronising and dull. It is pretty much up-to-date with the science in what is always a fast-moving field, making this a useful snapshot of the frontline of important areas of biomedical science.

Read it now – it'll need another edition by this time next year.

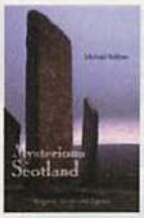
Ian Simmons

Fortean Times Verdict
READABLE (AND SCARY) SNAPSHOT OF BIOMEDICAL NASTIES **8**

Mysterious Scotland

Michael Balfour

Mainstream Publishing 1997 (2003 edition reviewed)
Pb, 221 pp, plates, index, £7.99, ISBN 1 84018 728 X



Wow!

This book is a veritable cabinet of curiosities full of interesting stuff. The title of *Mysterious Scotland* is a bit misleading – I was expecting a book of the paranormal, of folk tales and of Nessies. Well, it's that and more. About half of the book is what I expected. The rest is an interesting journey through highlights of Scottish history, and both parts are thoroughly mixed together to form a fascinating *pot pouri* of a book.

Balfour goes for a short, sharp shock approach – don't expect an in depth coverage of anything because it isn't there – for example Nessie is discussed, and dismissed, in a couple of pages and Glamis Castle (the most haunted castle in Scotland) has barely half a page. But the plus side of this coin is that there is a new mystery on virtually every page.

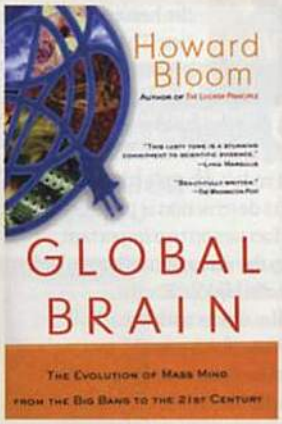
If you're visiting Scotland and want to find out what to dip into in a fortean context, then this is the book for you – the index will guide you round the country. The downside is there are no references and no bibliography so for further research you're on your own.

Gordon Rutter

Fortean Times Verdict
A SCOTTISH FORTEAN PRIMER **9**

Overmind over matter

Although it is well researched and challenging, this study fails to capture the magic of the author's unacknowledged predecessor



Global Brain

The evolution of mass mind from the Big Bang to the 21st century

Howard Bloom

John Wiley & Sons
Pb, 370pp, ind, bib, illus, $25.95, ISBN 0 471 41919 2

The somewhat ungainly subtitle of this book pretty much sums up its thrust: "The evolution of the mass mind from the Big Bang to the 21st century". It is well written and well researched (to an almost overwhelming degree, with 127 pages of notes and bibliography). The basic conceit of the book is that there is an inherent dynamic in which units of life – whether bacteria, primitive organisms, animals or humans – seek to construct information networks, creating in that process a sort of spectral overmind that in a kind of feedback loop which affects the further perceptions, actions and reactions of the individual units involved. Nature has been doing this for eons prior to the advent of the World Wide Web or the Internet. Cyberspatial constructs are, in effect, simply means of furthering this process in which imitation, learning, adaptive behaviour and ultimately language – even "creative bickering" – were and still are key elements. Bloom tracks his theme all the way up from teeming, heaving microscopic life to animals, humans and whole civilisations. A welcome aspect of this effort is that it challenges the bleak and over-simplistic notion of the "selfish gene". Bloom shows that life has co-operated among its parts as much as its individuals have promoted their genes at the expense of others. We weep when we learn of human or animal suffering; a hero leaps off a bridge to save a stranger fallen into the river: what underlies those acts is, in the long term, as powerful as the immediate sense of self-preservation or the preservation of one's offspring.

The ballet between conformity and diversity, the primordial interactive dynamics of collective units of life, emerges as a key theme in Bloom's book, and "The kidnap of the mass mind", his chapter concerning its current manifestations in human societies, is timely. Total conformity "throttles" the mass mind, as excessive diversity dissipates it. Although not new, Bloom's informed sorties into the intricacies of perception, and the view of reality as an hallucination ("Individual perception untainted by others' influence does not exist"), are worthwhile. He also emphasises that "[t]he global brain is not just human... It turns all creatures great and small into probers, crafters, innovators, ears and eyes". He pictures "a global interlace of humans, microbes, plants, and animals". His closing, futuristic, vision is of the rise of nanotechnology, which, if made to plug into the bacterial genome, would produce "swarms" of "bacterial microcyborgs" far exceeding the numbers of the human race or cells in a human brain, weaving a further web of the global brain of unimaginable complexity capable of equally unimaginable achievements, perhaps even plumbing the seething energies of the quantum vacuum and "resculpting the Einsteinian landscape of space and time".

The book is packed with fascinating information, but somehow manages to amount to nothing greater than the sum of its parts and fails to unveil a vision that has not already been offered to us, though it does partially update it. Bloom admits that Peter Russell's *The Global Brain (The Awakening Earth* in Britain) of the early 1980s was the first book on the subject, yet Russell was in turn merely updating the much earlier vision of the French priest-scientist Teilhard de Chardin, who predicted the information age in which we now live, and spoke of life, the biosphere, enfolding the Earth's globe and so continually meeting itself, developing a web of ever-increasing complexity. Bloom's book adds nothing but updated detail to this essential vision. Moreover, Bloom's book remains remorselessly materialistic, while de Chardin added the magic dust of consciousness to his vision. He philosophised about the "planetisation of mankind" creating a "noosphere", a within of exterior matter, like the mind is the within of the brain. This, de Chardin averred, was the true "super-organism" that was being born: the very spirit of the Earth. When this process completed itself "the secret that lies at the heart of metaphysics" would become understood, and he even suggested that the individuals who formed it would interconnect at telepathic levels. This was the real, towering vision of the global mind, presented over half a century ago, and yet incredibly, considering its dozens of pages of bibliography, Bloom's book does not cite de Chardin. That ignorance shows.

Paul Devereux

Fortean Times Verdict
LOTS OF INFORMATION BUT NO FINAL COHERENT VISION **6**

Global conflict

The definitive television history of the 20th century's most momentous war

The World at War 30th Anniversary Box Set

DVD Fremantle Home Entertainment, £149.99

When it was first screened in 1973-74, this 26-hour account of the Second World War helped reshape the way we viewed a conflict that, in the Seventies, was not all that distant. It eschewed the comforts of nostalgia or a solely British perspective, instead bringing home to viewers the truly global nature of the 20th century's most apocalyptic conflagration, a conflict that raged from the seas of the North Atlantic to the jungles of New Guinea. The savagery of the fighting on the Eastern Front, the unimaginable horrors of the Holocaust and the results of British and American bombing on German cities were all squarely faced. Much of the series' power came not just from the incredible amount of archive footage unearthed from both public and private sources but from the hours of interviews the programme makers

It reshaped the way we viewed World War Two

conducted with the bombers and the bombed, the tortured and the torturers. Everyone, from Hitler's architect and armaments minister, Albert Speer, and Britain's architect of area bombing, Arthur Harris, to ordinary British soldiers or Russian civilians who survived the Siege of Leningrad, were given the chance to speak; this was not intended to be a top-down, analytic history so much as a mosaic of widely differing voices and experiences.

And then there's Laurence Olivier's eccentric narration – a performance by turns sardonic, portentous and even playful.

This 30th anniversary set includes all of the 11 'specials' that followed the original series, an extra three-hour disc of previously unseen interviews, Mark Arnold-Forster's book *The World at War* and a facsimile of the original 1974 BAFTA 'making of' booklet. It's a rather expensive investment but, 30 years on, TWAW is still required viewing for students of 20th century history; Nazi ufologists and Holocaust deniers take note!

DAVID SUTTON

Fortean Times Verdict

STILL THE MOTHER OF ALL WWII DOCUMENTARIES **10**

COMPETITION

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Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers

Dir Peter Jackson, 2002

DVD Entertainment in Video, £24.99

This second part of Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy successfully continues the heroic tone of the first. The chief problem for the middle part of a trilogy is that the main story arc has no beginning and no conclusion. While the story of Frodo's struggle to take the One Ring to its destruction is progressed, this episode focuses on two important battles in the war against Sauron's plan to dominate Middle Earth

The film opens with breathtaking aerial views of the natural spectacle of New Zealand's mountains which contrast perfectly with the truly astonishing computer-generated depictions of the two conflicts at its climax. These are hugely impressive in their scale and complexity as the view swoops over battlefields at Helm's Deep and at Isengard, each crammed with thousands of seemingly individual conflicts, as well as group battles, taking place simultaneously.

The Two Towers will also be noted for its introduction of the slimy little fratricide Gollum, arguably the most important of the Ringbearers. This repulsive and degenerate character – all the more remarkable for being completely computer generated – is brought vividly to life by the voice and body-modelling of Andy Serkis. The other notable feature of the film is the depiction of the Ents (mobile tree-like beings) and their 'shepherd' Treebeard.

Purists, however, will never get past Jackson's deviations from Tolkien's books, which is their loss. In adapting the essential storylines and characters for the big screen, Jackson has caught the spirit of Tolkien's own wish to create a mythology for the English-speaking world – and has also eulogised the gamer's archetypal role-playing fantasy.

Bob Rickard

Fortean Times Verdict

ESSENTIAL VIEWING FOR TOLKIEN FANS – THOUGH NOT PURISTS **8**

Contemporary Japanese cinema

Japanese genre cinema is currently among the best in the world, with new films being pumped out at a furious rate and even the weakest of them proving considerably more inventive than their stagnant and largely derivative Western counterparts.

Uzumaki, (Artsmagic Eastern Cult Cinema, £19.99) is pop video director Higuchinsky's quirky adaptation of Junji Ito's intensely disturbing manga series. Like the comic, it's narrated by a schoolgirl, Kirie, whose small rural town is transformed by what can best be described as spirals from another dimension. At first it seems innocent enough – snails and spiral snacks become suddenly fascinating – but this spiralmania soon becomes a lethal obsession, and then the transformations begin... Ito's manga soon descends into unimaginable horrors which could never be translated to the screen, while Higuchinsky's approach is more humorous and surreal. Good, strange fun, but not a patch on the manga.

Hypnosis (Artsmagic Eastern Cult Cinema, £19.99) opens with a number of gruesome suicides, the victims yabbering about a "green monkey" before offing themselves in cruel and unusual fashions. A detective and a psychiatrist begin to unravel a bizarre plot and things soon descend into extreme strangeness, involving multiple personalities, paranormal abilities and very abnormal psychology. Stylish, absorbing and surprising, *Hypnosis* will keep you puzzling until the very end.

MARK PILKINGTON

Versus (Tartan Asia Extreme, £19.99) is an attempt to create a film that is essentially one, long protracted fight sequence. In a Hollywood film, such a single-minded aim would have been undermined by the need to psychologise the characters and explain their motivation. In director Ryuhei Kitamura's hands, *Versus* blithely does away with such unnecessary humanistic trimmings and instead delivers two hours of virtually non-stop carnage in which an escaped convict, a gang of crooks, a clutch of Yakuza zombies, an ancient sorcerer and two insane policemen with a very large gun do battle in the Forest of Resurrection. It comes on like an unholy collision between a fashion shoot and *The Evil Dead*, as gallons of blood and piles of steaming viscera don't so much as disarrange the combatants' fashionable hairdos. What there is, is perfect; in all fairness, though, there's perhaps a little too much of it – trimmed by 30 minutes it would have been a leaner and less exhausting film. Still, it's an unforgettable exercise in total mayhem.

DAVID SUTTON

Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Operation Resurrection

PS2, GC, XB Activision/id Software £34.99

The original Wolfenstein 3D was *the* seminal first-person shooter; a decade later, id Software updated their distillation of Nazi/occult mythology with the wonderfully atmospheric, and at times truly scary, *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*. RTCW now arrives on consoles in the form of *Operation Resurrection*. The storyline is the same: you are enlisted by a fictionalised version of the OSS to find out exactly what bizarre occult research Himmler's SS Paranormal Division is conducting. The console game adds a new seven-part prologue set in North Africa (a tip of the hat to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, but I did wonder quite what the Nazis could be doing in Egypt by 1943). These new levels add little, and after your inevitable capture you find yourself banged up in Castle Wolfenstein at the point where the PC game begins.

It's not a bad conversion, but anyone who has played *RTCW* won't find much of interest here; the chilling atmosphere and splendid set-pieces of the PC version seem to fall rather flat on the PS2. For console-only players, though, it's an enjoyable opportunity to despatch plenty of SS fanatics, flesh-eating zombies, and resurrected Teutonic knights.

A better bet for fans of the PC *RTCW* is the multi-player follow-up *Enemy Territory*, a stand-alone online game which introduces many new elements to the *RTCW* stable. It's team-based, allowing you to take on various roles from sniper to medic and develop your rank, weapons and skills as you play. Very good stuff – and best of all it's available as a completely free download (you don't need *RTCW* installed) at: games.activision.com/games/wolfenstein/

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict
NAZI-BLASTING FUN FOR THE CONSOLE GENERATION **6**

Red Faction II

PC, PS2, GC, XB THQ £29.99

This follow-up to 2001's *Red Faction*, an inventive but patchy futuristic shooter, is more interesting than your average sequel; while it inhabits the same universe as the original, it ditches its Martian colony setting and characters, returning instead to a dystopian Earth where, as a nanotech enhanced squaddie-turned-revolutionary called Alias, you must rid the world of the evil Chancellor Sopot. Along the way, of course, there's no shortage of other baddies to blow away, and a hugely satisfying arsenal of high-tech weapons with which to do so. This may not be *Half Life*, but it *is* genuinely action-packed, very varied and never dull. And the fully destructible scenery is a treat for those of a vandalistic bent!

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict
A PACY AND ACTION-PACKED SCI FI SHOOTER **7**

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Shadow playing

The rich and strange world of *Neverwinter Nights* continues to grow apace...

Neverwinter Nights: The Shadows of Undrentide

PC, Atari/Bioware £19.99

I think we need to find a more suitable term than 'game' to describe world creation suites like the award-winning *Neverwinter Nights*; the word does no justice to the scope of 'games' like NWN and just fixates the scorn of non-gamers.

What distinguished the original was Bioware's effort to shift the best-selling *Baldur's Gate* fantasy role-playing series into a true 3D environment and the Aurora toolset, used to create the official game campaign, was included on the NWN discs. In effect, Bioware handed over to talented fans the ability to create and develop their own interactive fantasy worlds – from smutty frolics to lofty recreations of Tolkien's Arda.

Within a year there were several thousand fan-made modules and several hundred persistent worlds of varying quality, available online completely free. (Begin by looking at **nwvault.ign.com/**). Since then, vigorous and ingenious fan auteurs have driven some of the development of the construction system itself, creating new character models, new tile-sets, new monsters and new behavioural scripts. More importantly, they have helped create the 'persistence' required for the worlds that stay open online 24/7. These persistent worlds alone represent years of open-ended real-time adventures and have evolved their own economies and even crafting and employment systems.

Shadows of Undrentide is an expansion pack that includes a new, well-scripted, stand-alone single-player game, by the Bioware team, lasting up to 30 hours. The pack introduces 16 new monsters, 50 new spells, 30 new feats, desert ruins and winter landscape tile-sets, grenade-like weapons and five new 'prestige' character classes. Also included, for the huge on-line gaming community and world-makers, are the associated official tool-set codes, scripts, images, sounds and character voice sets.

Now, with NWN being available for UNIX and Mac platforms, everyone can enjoy a lifetime of free, interactive role-playing adventure, limited only by the imaginations of the huge online community of players and creators.

Bob Rickard

Fortean Times Verdict
INTERACTIVE 3D FANTASY ROLEPLAY AT ITS VERY BEST **10**

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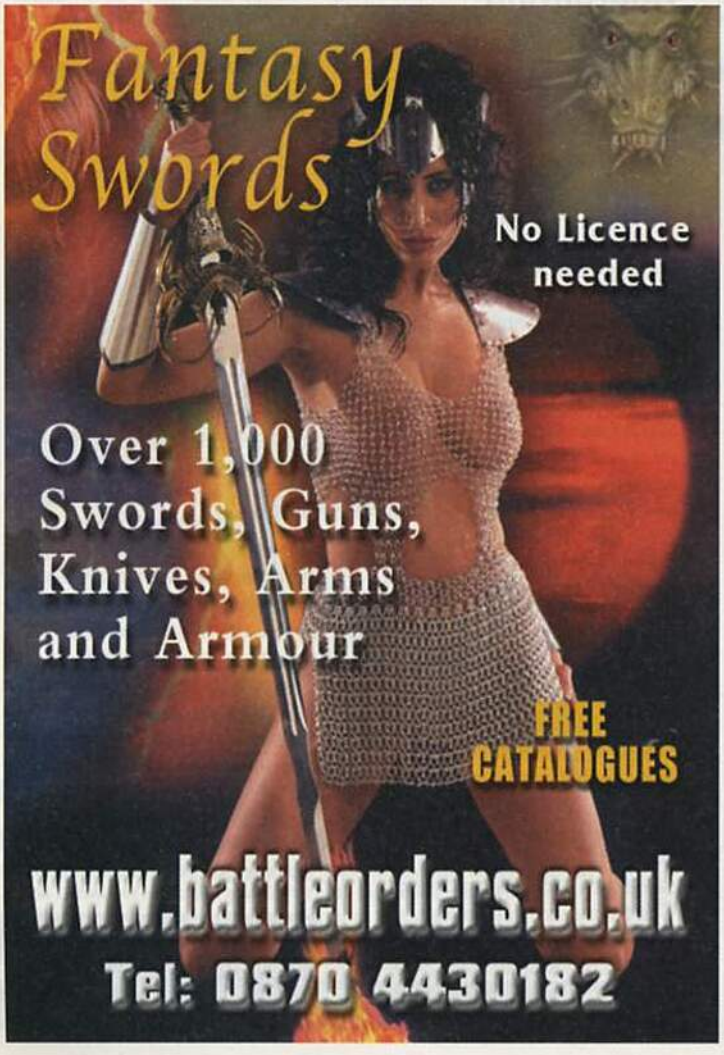

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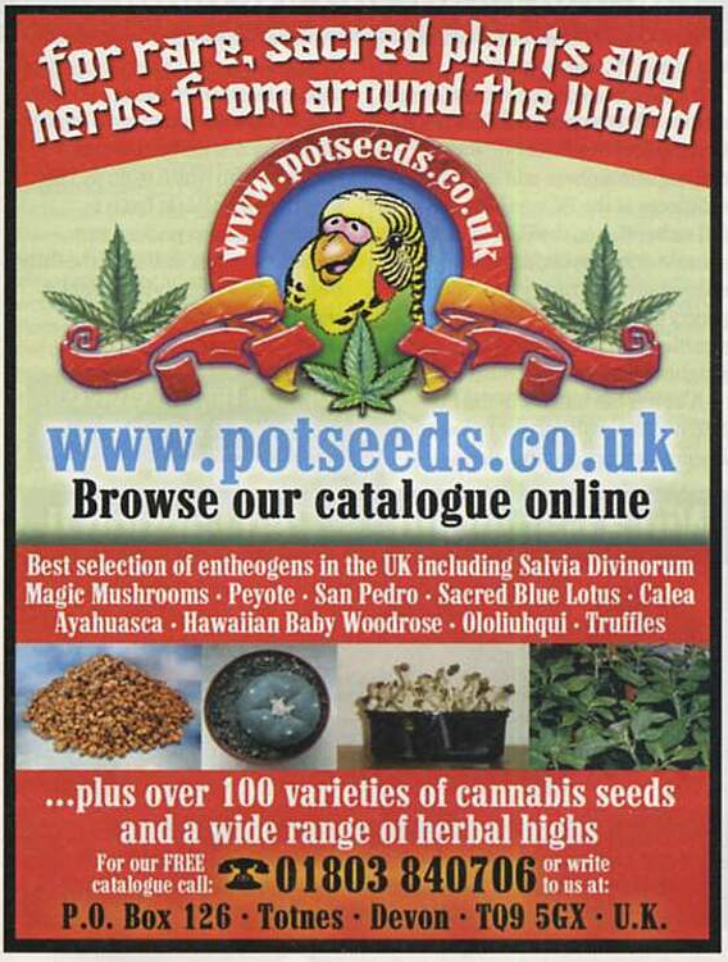
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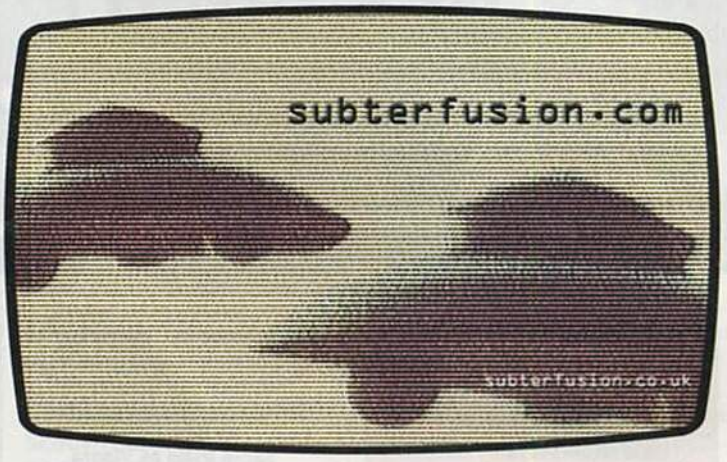

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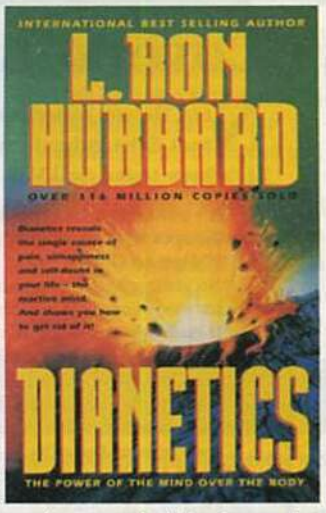
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letters

Twin telepathy

I found Guy Lyon Playfair's article on twin telepathy [**FT171:34-40**] enlightening and interesting. However, I feel that relying on archival sources for instances of twin telepathy is dangerous, as it could easily lead to mistaken conclusions. For example, we find that one twin breaks a leg at the same moment as the other; or twins buy similar purses at the same time.

Such instances can be explained as odd matches – random and unlikely events that seem to stand out because we ignore non-occurrences. For example, how often does one twin break a leg while the other doesn't? Or, how often does one twin buy a purse while the other buys something else (such as a cigarette holder)? Out of all of these non-occurrences, it's not surprising that there are one or two hits.

Beyond odd matches, de Becker (*The Gift of Fear*, 1997) suggests that people may be intuitively and unconsciously responding to shared stimuli (e.g. national news stories or special dates) to think or act in certain ways. Thus, two twins buying a similar purse, even though they are continents apart, may be due to an advertisement in a commonly-read magazine. Human intuition is powerful and often operates below the level of conscious awareness.

Finally, while the EPR (not EPA) paradox, named after Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen* does describe how matter can be intrinsically connected – it describes effects at the quantum level, not at the human level of breaking bones.

If telepathy does exist, the most likely place to find it is among twins. However, we must sift out the effects of odd matches and intuition and look for a workable explanation.

William Ashton, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology and Political Science, York College, City University of New York

FOOTNOTE

* A Einstein, B Podolsky, & N Rosen: "Can quantum-mechanical description of physical reality be considered complete?" (*Physical Review*, 47, 777-780, 1935).

As an identical twin and scientist, I read "The Twin Thing" with considerable interest. Sad to say, it was pseudo-science at its best (or worst) with opinions, assumptions and coincidences dressed up as serious research. Concluding the article with "It is beginning to look very much like a quantum thing" just put the icing on the cake.

Dave Morton
Loughborough, Leicestershire

I very much enjoyed the article on twins, especially since I recently found out that my sister's 12-year-old identical twin sons have developed their own secret language. However, it seems to me that Mr Playfair's on-screen polygraph experiments have in fact produced intriguing evidence, not of telepathy (knowing another's thought at a distance), but of empathy (feeling another's pain at a distance).

It would be most interesting to extend the experiment to measure this type of response in different types of pairs – husband/wife, brother/sister, parent/child, life-long "best" friends, strangers – to see if the capacity for empathy is as widespread among humans as I suspect it is. It might even be demonstrable that this capacity exists in animals and other sentient beings. Wasn't it demonstrated that plants were capable of empathy with one another's pain in a famous polygraph experiment?

Scotlyn Sabean
Killybegs, Co. Donegal

My aunt has eight children, including three sets of twins. The most recent were born with disabilities and the preceding set were given up for adoption, but I have discussed psychic connection with one of the first set of twins, and she assures me that she has never experienced any twin-related synchronicity, nor any kind of mental link with her brother.

However, the other two siblings, born about two years apart, recently got married suddenly on the same day, each unaware of the other. Chris is, I think, 21 and Kevin is 23. They don't have much contact with each other, or their mother, who lives on the Scottish island of Uist, as Chris is in the army and Kevin lives in Plymouth. Their mother, understandably, attended neither wedding, unwilling to favour one son over the other.

Caroline Kemp
Aberdeen

Mind to mind

Telepathy has some basic problems – the same as those identified by Ludwig Wittgenstein as relating to the nature of language, meaning and thought.

Suppose you could read my mind at this moment. A whole series of images are going through it. You may well pick up the images, but how will you know what they mean for me? Picking up on "what is going through my mind" is not the same as "reading my thoughts" in terms of their meaningful content. Suppose you picked up my album of family photographs; how would you know what they actually meant for me, however well you might describe them "factually"?

Telepathy seems to demonstrate itself most clearly when related to images that have little "content", transmitting pictures of squares, circles, and so on, but the moment the signified image goes beyond such banalities we seem to enter into something that is quite different.

Most of us, it seems to me, are locked into the very world-view that needs to dissolve before real clarity appears. That was Wittgenstein's problem as well, though in a somewhat different context, and if one of the finest minds had problems with this then we should all be a little more careful before declaring where the solution lies.

Mike Harding
London

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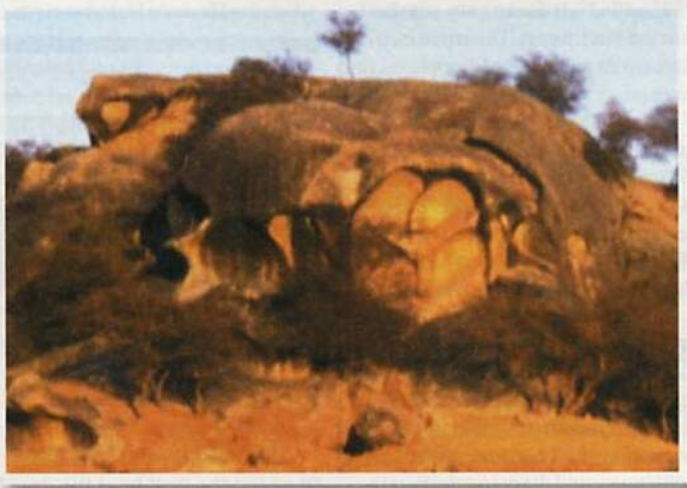


Simon Woolley from Winchester took this picture from a moving car near the town of Gulguttar in Rajasthan, north-west India, in December 1994. Being a geography teacher, he saw it as a good example of exfoliation – weathering of the local granite. He only noticed the skull image after the shot was developed.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the PO box address at the top of the page (with a SAE or international reply coupon) and we'll pay a tenner or 20 dollars for any we use.

letters

Robert Knox 1 – or Robinson Crusoe?

A recent letter in *The Guardian* cast doubt on the idea that Alexander Selkirk was the model for Robinson Crusoe [**FT170:76**]. The writer's proposed candidate is Robert Knox, whose journal *An Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon* about his 20 years' captivity under the King of Kandy was published in 1681 by the Royal Society, with the blessing of Dr Robert Hooke and Christopher Wren. While the idea of a solitary castaway on an uninhabited island may have derived from Selkirk, there were many other printed accounts of castaways on desert islands available to Defoe, including Henry Neville's *Isle of Pines* (1668), Ringrose's *Bucaniers of America* (1685) and Dampier's *New Voyage around the World* (1697).

Another inspiration for Defoe's book would have been the accounts of voyages, real or imaginary, from John Mandeville to Hakluyt and Purchas onwards.

Edward Young
London

Robert Knox 2 – the anatomist

Regarding the letter about Burke and Hare [**FT172:73**], my great-great-grandfather, William Grecian, attended the lectures and demonstrations on cadavers given by Dr Robert Knox from the autumn of 1827 to November 1828. Burke & Hare sold their first murdered victim to Knox on 29 November 1827, and were arrested on 2 November 1828. It is therefore certain that my ancestor watched the murder dissections. The reason Knox required such a large supply of corpses was his reputation and fame; he used to give three lectures a day to audiences of 500, promising "a full Demonstration on Fresh Anatomical Subjects". The game was up when some students recognised the body on the slab as a prostitute they had been with the previous night. Although the year's course was about £4, a student could have a body to himself for an additional three guineas. Edinburgh rioted on the 12 February 1829, and the Anatomy Act was passed in 1832. This was supposed to put an end to all secret supplies to the anatomical schools.

Although Knox escaped prosecution, his career as a surgeon was over and he was ostracised. He moved to Glasgow and from there to London, where he set up as a midwife in Hackney. In 1976 I finally tracked him down to Brookwood Cemetery, near Woking, Surrey. This vast private cemetery used to be accessed via the Necropolis line from Waterloo station, but this was bombed out in World War II. I was told by telephone that his grave was in a dense thicket of rhododendron bushes, but my wife and I found that the area had been completely cleared, and a new, very large, gravestone had been laid, apparently quite recently. This read simply "Robert Knox, Anatomist, 1792 – 1862". It doesn't say who had carried out this act. The stone is in Eastern Avenue, near Chapel Avenue.

An excellent description of the grisly proceedings may be read in W Roughead's book, *Burke and Hare*, in the Famous British Trials series.

William Neil
By email

Another air crash

Continuing the theme of crashing birds [FT171:74], here is another kamikaze featherbrain, apparently a pigeon, that chose to target the window of my in-laws' dining room. There were no remnants of this unfortunate avian on the ground below the window, not even a feather.
Jason Till, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

Bog frog

I got a bit of a surprise today [12 June] in the downstairs loo. Something dark and lumpy was bobbing up and down in a desperate manner. Switching on the light, I saw it was a frog! Could it have entered the water system and been flushed into the bowl – or climbed up the pipe from the sewer and around the U-bend? I have heard scare stories of rats coming up through the pipes and biting peoples' bottoms, but had been incredulous. The rather distressed amphibian was soon relocated to the garden pond.

Karen Hall
Carlton, Bedfordshire

Editor's note: Snakes are the most common intruders in lavatory bowls. We have many instances on record.

Blood of the dead

David Sivier's letter on blood libel [**FT172:72**] was extremely interesting. He doesn't mention when the Hexham histories were written, but it is known (or at least popularly thought) that the Scottish drank the blood of their dead. In fact, this is actually mentioned in the infamous film, *Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves* – "The Celts? But they drink the blood of their dead?" being possibly the only fact they got half-right in the whole film.

"It keeps the wolf from the door."

Blood-drinking was akin to the cult of head-taking. It was believed that you gained the strength and wisdom of your enemy, whose head you had lopped off, and that the act of consuming the blood (not a large amount) brought you spiritually closer to the departed. Possibly the tale that the Prior of Hexham relates is merely an embroidered account of this practice.

Incidentally, I always understood that the blood libel arose from the marking of Jewish doorposts with the blood of a sacrificed animal on the festival of Passover – which commemorates the 'passing over' of the angel of death in Egypt. This practice was used against the Jews by unscrupulous noblemen who owed them money – usury being the only trade that they were allowed to follow. It was cheaper to stir the serfs into blood lust than repay the Jews, plus interest.

Aliss McGregor
Rusholme, Manchester

Ghostwatch reply

Stephen Volk [**FT172:71**] correctly lists three things I didn't explain in my letter on the Ghostwatch saga [**FT170:75**]: why I agreed to act as consultant, why I accepted the fee, and why I congratulated him on the quality of his script. I am happy to set the record straight.

When originally approached by Mr Volk and producer Hilary Manning, I was given no idea of what they really had in mind. Had they said: "Oh hi, we're planning to rip off your book *This House is Haunted*, and we'd like your name at the top of the credits to give the impression that you approved of the programme", I would have declined the offer. I accepted the fee (and the out-of-court settlement) because I didn't get where I am today by working for nothing.

If I made polite noises about Mr Volk's script, it is because he is indeed a very good scriptwriter.

Guy Lyon Playfair
London

Shiver me timbers!

Mary Celeste

Much as I enjoyed Roy Bainton's collection of maritime yarns [**FT172:46-52**], it is necessary to set matters straight about David Williams's hypothesis that the abandonment of the *Mary Celeste* was due to a seaquake.

Firstly, the link given [**FT172:52**] is now inaccurate; www.seaquake.com is in the hands of a cybersquatting company, and Williams's paper is at: http://www.deafwhale.com/maryceleste/.

Secondly, there was no seismic recording equipment installed at Zurich in 1872; the first time any distant earthquake was recorded anywhere was not until 1889, and the ability to locate distant earthquakes came later still. Williams is aware of this, so the reference to Zurich seems to be Bainton's addition.

While Williams's idea that the crew of the *Mary Celeste* panicked after the ship was shaken by an undersea earthquake is more plausible than some others, there are a number of objections to it, principally that if the shaking caused by the (hypothetical) quake was strong enough to cause damage to the ship, one would imagine that it would also have caused considerable havoc to the loose fittings and domestic items in the living quarters, which seems not to have happened. Williams does not help his case by writing things like "a ship above an explosive magnitude three event... might join the many thousands of vessels posted as 'missing without a trace'." Since magnitude three events are extremely common in the North Sea amongst other places, the UK merchant fleet would have been decimated by now if this were true

Roger Musson
Edinburgh

Editor's note: Another hypothesis put forward is that the *Mary Celeste* was struck by a small waterspout without doing much damage. This would have reduced the barometric pressure, causing the hatch covers to blow off (which was how they were found) and. driving the bilge water up the pump well, where a valve would have prevented it from returning immediately to the hold. When a rod was dropped down the pump well to measure the water in the hold, it would have given the impression that the ship was sinking, causing the crew to abandon ship in panic. The overloaded yawl could then have sunk with all hands. [**FT151:7**].

The Great Eastern

Roy Bainton is less than fair to Brunel's ship, the *Great Eastern* [**FT172:51**]. "Her fortunes seemed to have turned when she was hired to lay the transatlantic cable," he writes, "but the cable was lost and she returned in shame." However, that was not the end of the story.

The following year [1866] the *Great Eastern* not only successfully laid a new operational telegraph cable across the Atlantic, but she grappled for and recovered the cable lost the previous year, and then completed laying that one as well, thus laying two transatlantic cables within a few months. This was a huge triumph, cutting the time to send messages between the Old World and the New from weeks to seconds. This achievement Arthur C Clarke called "the Victorian equivalent of the Apollo project", and no other ship of her day could have matched her ability for this task. Not until the deployment of communication satellites a century later was there a comparable leap in communications technology. A good account of the cable enterprise is given in *A Thread Across the Ocean* by John Steele Gordon (Walker & Company, 2002).

Mr Bainton also mentions the *Pamir*: one of her sister ships, built as the *Padua* (one of the famous Flying Ps) is still sailing as the Russian sail training vessel *Kruzenshtern*, and is frequently seen in British ports. (http://www.cenit.nu/inform/kryzen.html)

Roger Downham
Penryn, Cornwall

While the *Great Eastern* left a long trail of bankruptcies in her wake, killed over 30 of her crew and wrecked 10 other vessels during her career, she did survive an impact with an uncharted rock in 1862 which left an 80ft (24.4m) gash in her hull. She was saved by her double bottom, now a common feature on large ships, but then a novelty, so it's perhaps not surprising that she became the subject of a longstanding legend, one that invoked a particular terror in the Victorian era – live inhumation.

The story of the one, sometimes two, workmen entombed in the hull first appeared in print in James Duggan's book *The Great Iron Ship* (1953). Duggan published an extract from a letter sent to him by a tug boat skipper called David Duggan who claimed to have heard the story from men engaged in dismantling the *Great Eastern* at Birkenhead in 1889. The story has all the hallmarks of contemporary legend. Such a discovery would have inevitably set the wheels of bureaucracy in motion, but there is no mention of any bodies being found in the records of the shipbreakers, Henry Bath and Sons, nor in local newspapers or the coroner's court.

Neither is there any record of workers being reported missing during the building of the ship, although several were known to have died in accidents. Besides, each compartment of the double bottom had an inspection hatch, and these were left open for the launching so the outer hull could be checked for leaks. They were not bolted down until the ship had been in service for over a year and would have been re-opened at regular intervals afterwards to check for leaks and corrosion. It would not have been possible for anyone to have been entombed in the double bottom, let alone for them to have remained undiscovered for so long.

None of this goes any way towards explaining the sound of hammering said to have been reported at various times throughout the ship's life. Perhaps after all she was haunted, possibly by one of her dead crew or the passenger who was said to have gone into the ship's hold and never come out...

Phil Hide
By email

Hey ho and up she rises

I too sailed on the 'ten day boat' the *SS Borodino* in the early 1960s, immortalised now in Roy Bainton's "Shiver Me Timbers!" [**FT172:46-52**]. By the time I sailed on her as acting third mate, she was a clapped-out rust bucket of a glorified coaster with perhaps some illusions of grandeur still clinging to her hull.

Mr Bainton may have a point about legless Percy. As I remember, virtually every time we sailed from Copenhagen for Hull after five days in port, most of the crew were legless. A fair proportion of the deck crew usually had a dose of gonorrhoea too, which didn't improve their mobility. The reference to naked and trembling junior stewards also brought back fond memories. In those days, almost all the stewards were gay, and screaming, naked and trembling junior stewards were a common sight on board the ship, particularly when the deck crew came aboard, legless, after a good night ashore. Mr Bainton may remember that "Shiver me timbers" was a familiar cry down aft on the *SS Borodino* on a Friday night – along with "After you with the Vaseline, flower".

Frederick Harrison
London

letters

Radio reciprocity

Stephen Volk mentioned a weird phenomenon he calls 'radio reciprocity' – where what he has just been writing or thinking to himself is echoed almost immediately on the radio [**FT172:71**]. It may be possible to shed some light on this by comparing it to another strange yet not uncommon phenomenon: the incorporation of environmental stimuli into our dreams.

To give an example: I dream I am sitting at home, and I see the postman come up the drive with a parcel and ring the doorbell. I then wake up and realise that the dream doorbell was really my alarm clock. What is striking is that the doorbell rings in the expected place in the dream narrative. One explanation for this is precognition. Another is that the temporal ordering of experiences, especially in dreamlike or trance states, and especially when the experiences are presented in meaningful narratives, can differ from the objective temporal ordering of the events experienced. (The ultimate explanation for this would be neurological; chapters 5 & 6 of Dennett's *Consciousness Explained* shed some interesting light on this general area.)

The situations mentioned by Volk (sitting typing at his desk, lying in the bath) are ones in which a mild trance could easily occur. This kind of account may go some way towards explaining experiences of near-immediate precognition in general.

Richard Gipps
Oxford

Recently, I took my girlfriend to the cinema, leaving her toddler with friends, and when we arrived back he was still awake, and they were watching *The Hunt For Red October*. When my girlfriend asked how the child was, our babysitting friend replied "He's tired". At the exact same moment I was looking at the TV and subtitles for the Russian being spoken onscreen were translated as "He's tired".

One evening, I was chatting with a friend in a pub. A variety of music was playing, and as one song came to an end, I hummed the opening bars of YMCA, for no particular reason. Seconds later, the song came on the pub speakers. I notice that synchronous events like this, no matter how minuscule, do tend to occur in greater volumes at times of major change in my life.

Mason Henry Summers
Leeds

A couple of months ago, I was driving into Bedford on the A428 and listening to Pink Floyd's "Wish you were here". Just as it got to the lyric "hot ashes for trees", I noticed a house sign saying "Ashtree". I pass that way regularly but had never consciously noticed the sign before. What struck me was the extraordinary timing that meant I read the word "Ashtree" exactly between the words 'ashes' and 'trees' on the song.

Marc Widdowson
Bedford

Quite often when I am thinking, writing, or reading a word, it will be spoken on the radio or television at the same moment. Mostly it's at home while I am working or reading with Radio 4 on in the background. I have been noting down my rum collection of words over the last few days to see if any pattern emerges, but I can't make head nor tail of them. They are: annoyed, cordial, Russia, Scot, weather, key, serious, family, French, drugs, fish, bomb, words.

Jane Miners
Truro, Cornwall

On many occasions I have been reading a book, magazine or paper with the television on in the background when a word or expression on the TV has coincided with the text of whatever I have been reading. I estimate that this has occurred on around 20 occasions. The words in question tend to be those which aren't over-frequently used, like 'massacre', 'conception' and 'mountain'. The effect is always quite impressive and startling.

On the subject of coincidence, while browsing in a record shop in Torquay last February I found a copy of The Mekon's 1980s indie hit "Ghosts Of American Astronauts" which I had always liked. After buying the record, my wife and I decided to walk to a nearby pub for a drink and some lunch. I watched the TV news in the pub and learned that the Space Shuttle Columbia had just disintegrated upon re-entry and that all astronauts on board had been killed. It took me several days to make the connection between the record title and the accident.

Alistair Moffatt
London

TV Time lapse

In 1997 I acquired a new camera and took interior photographs of my house. I was alone at the time and it was mid-afternoon. Preparing to photograph the display unit in my living room, I sat down on the coffee table in the centre of the room and surveyed the scene, holding the camera in my lap. I then stood up and took a picture using the flash.

When I collected the prints, I found to my amazement this shot of myself reflected in the TV screen, sitting down with the camera still in my lap. The flash is reflected in the screen, as is the rest of the room behind me. Whatever the explanation – and I can't think of one – it is obvious that I could not have taken the snap in the position shown in the TV reflection. There is no doubt about the fact that it is me in the reflection, I even remember the clothes I wore. The TV was off. What is the answer?

Lucie Smith Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire

Finding water?

At this year's FT UnConvention, I took part in parapsychology research for ASSAP and was amazed when I got a quite dramatic reaction in the dowsing experiment. I have never been interested in dowsing, or given it much thought. At home the next day, I made some rods from a couple of old coat hangers (large re-shaped paper clips also work), and found that the rods swung apart over water and electricity. To rule out self-delusion, I arranged a few blind trials, and successfully identified a covered mug containing water a number of times. This indicated that the water does not have to be running to be detected. The tricky part was to avoid interference from under floor water or electrical pipes.

I also got other people to try, and found that at least half got some reaction. As long as there were not strong reactions from water or electricity nearby, the rods often crossed over some metals.

I am an electrical design engineer, and would generally be fairly sceptical about such claims. However, I would be happy to demonstrate what I have learned under lab conditions (you can contact me via FT).

John Roberts
By email

Glory be!

Dean Potter's "celestial rarity" [**FT172:72**] is not a rainbow at all, but an arc. A rainbow is caused by reflection and refraction in falling raindrops. Arcs such as those shown in the photograph are caused by reflection and refraction in ice crystals in high-level clouds, usually cirrostratus. Indeed, some cirrus is visible in the photograph.

Arcs are associated with halos, which are complete (or near complete) circles formed by a similar process around the sun, primarily at a distance of 22 or 46 degrees. The halo appears in the photograph as part of a fainter circle above the arc. In the right conditions, fantastic displays of multiple halos and arcs can occur. Parhelia or sundogs [see **FT170:78, 173:73**] are a special type of halo.

The "rainbow halo" surrounding the shadow of an æroplane on clouds beneath the plane described by Paul Devendra [**FT172:74**] is called a "glory", and is caused by the diffraction of light by small water droplets in the cloud. You can observe a similar effect by going out early one sunny morning when there is dew on the ground. You will see a rainbow fringing your shadow. The well known "Brocken Spectre" (named after a German mountain) is another example of the same effect: climbing a mountain, you look down or across to a bank of fog and clouds, and see a giant shadow of yourself surrounded by rainbow colours. To find out more, I strongly recommend Robert Greenler's *Rainbows, Halos, and Glories* (CUP, 1980, ISBN 0 521 236053).

Dr Trevor Harley
Pitroddie, Perth

A glory is a diffraction pattern formed by light scattered from the observer's antisolar point – the point in the sky exactly opposite the sun. It's therefore most often seen when looking down on to bright clouds with the sun behind you, either from a mountain or an æroplane. Because the glory is always positioned opposite the sun, each observer sees it as a coloured ring around the shadow of his/her own head – if Mr Devendra looked closely, he would have seen that the glory was not only centred on the shadow of the æroplane, but focused on his exact location in the plane. If he changed seats, the glory would apparently shift to keep him centred.

Grant Hutchison
Dundee, Scotland

Editor's note: Thanks also to Leighton Johns, Terrence McCole, and Alan McIntosh. For a wonderful photograph of a glory see *Photographs of the Unknown* by Robert Rickard and Richard Kelly (NEL, 1980).

It happened to me...

First hand accounts from the message board of forteantimes.com

'Bone Implants'

I live in Fort Worth, Texas. The following events both happened here in Texas just three decades and 60 miles (96km) or so apart. When I was about seven years old and in the second grade in school an event happened to me that has remained very clear and very confusing to this day (I am now 37).

I was sitting in class one morning, feeling sort of fuzzy-headed, when I noticed that a spot on my neck was slightly itchy. I reached up and felt a very slight bump between my neck muscle and trachea. Like kids do I began to scratch it for a moment when a weird sensation went through me and I suddenly felt something poke out of the spot where I had felt a bump before. I pinched it with my nails and pulled on it and an object which looked like an inch-long semi-transparent section of a bird quill slid out with no pain, no blood, nada. I immediately had a strong feeling that I was not supposed to have removed it, a feeling that stayed with me for several days. I kept the whole incident to myself till I was grown and mentioned it to a couple of friends a few years ago.

The reason I am writing this now is because in September 2001 I was in bed asleep when I was jolted awake by an almost painfully intense vibrating, humming sound going through my head and body (no vibrator jokes please). It was keeping me pinned to the bed and the hum intensified as if something was plugged in and cranking up the energy going through me.

After about 10 seconds, there was a sound in my head that seemed extremely loud and resembled someone tuning through radio stations on a dial – lots of bits of voices and mechanical or electronic sounds all spliced together rising in intensity to a point where I thought something was going to short out in my head when it stopped. A split second later, the whole thing repeated. This was followed by a few seconds of the humming. The first thing to come into my mind after the last bit was "you weren't supposed to pull it out", meaning the thing in my neck. I hadn't thought of it for several years before this, and bam, that same sense of impending punishment for removing something from my neck all those years ago.

Mark D'Amico
By email

About ten years ago, when I was 12, I had a centimetre-long, semi-transparent "hair" in my arm which, on hindsight, was like a nail. This is what I thought it was, a bitten fingernail that had worked its way into my upper arm. It was very smooth, but had the bendy quality and colour of a fingernail. This had no feeling either, but was frustrating to pull out. Eventually I did pull it out, getting an immense feeling of satisfaction (rather than doom). Ever since I can remember (which is about six years!), I wake myself up with jerks and spasms, which aren't really bad, but stop me from getting back to sleep. I infrequently have a static hum that constantly runs though my head, and intensifies depending on how stressed I am. I have never linked these two incidents. My mother also had the same thing on her back, although she has told me of nothing concerning spasms or static hums. In both cases, we were left with small but deep holes that showed no bleeding. These have since disappeared. Has anyone else experienced such "bone" implants?

Bunj
By email

Lively chair

In 2000, I visited a house in a road named Westway in Raynes Park, southwest London, which my father-in-law Tom, a builder, was renovating. It was unoccupied and in a very poor state of repair. In the front bedroom upstairs there was a chair in the alcove to the left-hand-side of the chimney breast. Other than this, the room was empty with no carpet.

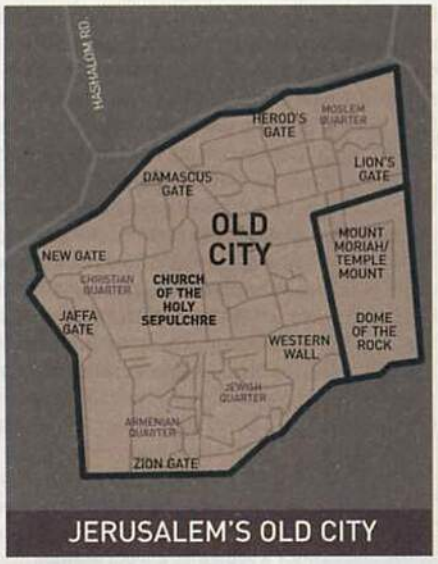
We returned downstairs for a cup of tea. While we were chatting, we heard a loud scraping noise upstairs and went to investigate. The chair was now in front of the main bedroom window. Then Tom dragged the chair about a foot, the sound exactly matching what we had heard from downstairs. Later that evening I phoned the woman who was to move into the house shortly. I spoke about business, then mentioned that the place was haunted. She replied that the previous occupier had committed suicide in the front bedroom by hanging himself from a joist in front of the main bedroom window. My thoughts went to the chair from the room. Was this the chair he stood on as he lashed the rope over the joist?

Paul Tudor
By email

FORTEAN TRAVELLER

25. Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem

DR JOHN ROWE makes a pilgrimage to one of the Holy Land's most revered sites – the tomb of Christ



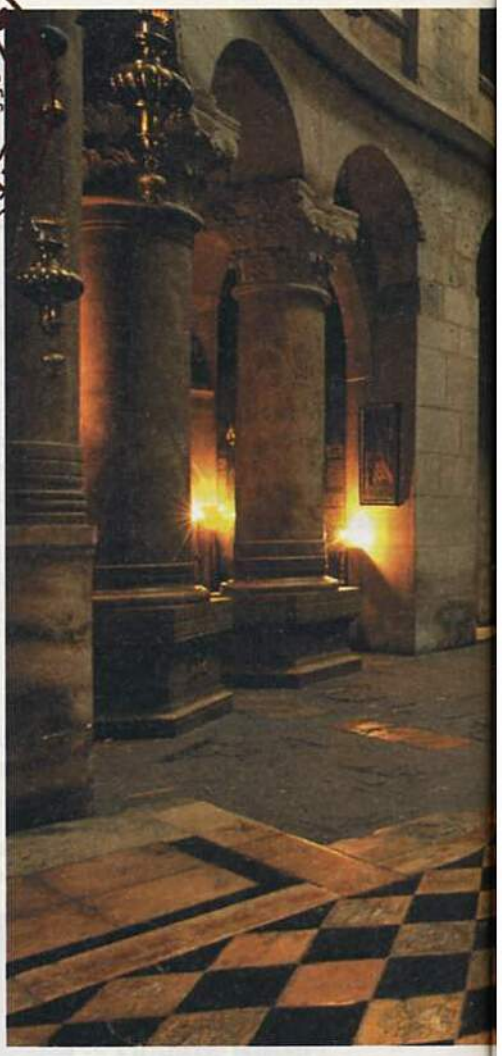
JERUSALEM'S OLD CITY

I occasionally work near Bethlehem and visit nearby Jerusalem whenever I have time. For me the place most evocative of this city's violent and sacred history is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, or the Church of the Anastasis (Resurrection) as it is known to Orthodox Christians. It contains within its present walls two of the most holy places in Christendom, the sepulchre itself – the alleged tomb of Christ and site of the regularly occurring miracle of the Holy Fire – and Golgotha, the traditional site of the crucifixion. The site was once a quarry to the east of the city walls, probably with tombs cut into the rock face. The proximity of at least one of these tombs to the execution site is described in the Gospels – a description that fits what we know about 1st century Jewish burial practice as well as confirming the Biblical account of being outside the city walls (they were expanded in AD 41–44 to include the quarry).

Excavations in 1961 suggested that Golgotha was originally a limestone outcrop 33ft (10m) high that stood by itself in the corner of the quarry, the top protruding from the earth like a skull. Some tradition of this being the location of Christ's crucifixion and burial must have remained amongst the members of the Jewish Christian sect. It is possible that, as with the tomb of St Peter in Rome and that of the house of Mary in Nazareth, the site was marked with identifying graffiti from early on. In AD 60 there was a Jewish revolt against the Romans and many fled the city. After the quelling of the revolt, many Jewish Christians returned and continued honouring sites associated with Jesus. As it was Jewish custom to visit tombs of dead teachers, the tomb of Christ was presumably visited, though if we believe the Biblical account it would have been as a site connected with the resurrection rather than for the veneration of mortal remains.

In 130, the Roman Emperor Hadrian rebuilt the city, still in ruins after the revolt, and renamed it Aelia Capitolina, after the Capitoline gods of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva. This rather insensitive act caused another revolt, the subsequent expulsion of Jews (including Christian Jews) and the resettlement of the city from other parts of Palestine. Some of the colonisers were non-Jewish Christians who apparently knew of the site – a visiting bishop, Melito, had Golgotha pointed out to him some time between 160–170. Hadrian's rebuilding included a temple, possibly to Venus, on the old quarry site, which was filled in and levelled. Hadrian may have chosen to build here because of its hilly location rather than because of its sacred associations for the defeated locals, but he also built a temple on the other main Jewish Christian site at the Grotto of the Nativity in Bethlehem, suggesting a deliberate policy of hijacking Christian sacred sites. The only evidence that it was dedicated to Venus comes from later Christian writers, who loathed the goddess of love more than other classical deities and may have wished to emphasise such pagan 'defilement'. From numismatic evidence, the temple may have been dedicated to Tyche, a relatively innocuous god in Christian eyes.

By 325, Christianity was coming to dominance under Constantine. In order to strengthen his hand in local episcopal power



struggles, Macarios, the bishop of Jerusalem, managed to get Constantine's permission to demolish the temple and look for the tomb of Christ. Constantine, although the first Christian emperor, was in many essentials a pagan, and appreciated the idea that his adopted religion should have its own sacred sites. The foundations of the temple were demolished and the infill excavated in the search for the tomb. Macarios was taking a risk, as Christians were still a minority in Jerusalem. This does, however, imply a degree of confidence on Marcarios' part that the tomb was just where tradition said. When the quarry was unearthed, to the relief (and surprise) of all, a number of rock tombs were found in the walls of the old quarry, and one was identified, perhaps by surviving graffiti, as the tomb of Christ. The cliff face was then hacked away to leave the portion with the tomb, and a space cleared around it. The excavators also found a rocky outcrop about 140ft (43m) away with another tomb at its base. This was declared to be Golgotha.

Constantine's mother, Helena, was on hand to supervise the work and conveniently found the Cross, dumped in a nearby cistern. A magnificent complex was built on the site. A round edifice, the Rotunda, rose over the tomb, which was encased in its own shrine known as the Edicule. There were courtyards, a garden and the Martyrion basilica. Only one contemporary account of the complex survives, that of Eusebius (382), who describes a "divine monument of immortality… decorated with gold mosaic and as much precious marble as the emperor could provide." The Rotunda became

CORBIS / SANDRO VANNINI

CORBIS / CARMEN REDONDO

REUTERS / REINHARD KRAUSE

LEFT: Interior of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.
ABOVE: Worshippers at the ritual of the Descent Of The Holy Fire.
BELOW: The Dome and Church as seen from the street

the central shrine of Christianity.

The complex was badly damaged by Persians in 614, by Muslims in 938 and – in a rare example of inter-faith co-operation – by Muslims and Jews in 966. It was more or less completely destroyed in 1009 on the orders of the Egyptian caliph al-Hakim, an unbalanced character who specialised in antagonising his subjects, whether Christian or Muslim, and who was particularly annoyed at the popularity of the Holy Fire miracle. The Rotunda was pulled down, leaving only the walls. The roof and upper walls of the original tomb cave were hacked down, leaving – one gathers by a comparison of descriptions before and after 1009 – only the burial couch and south wall.

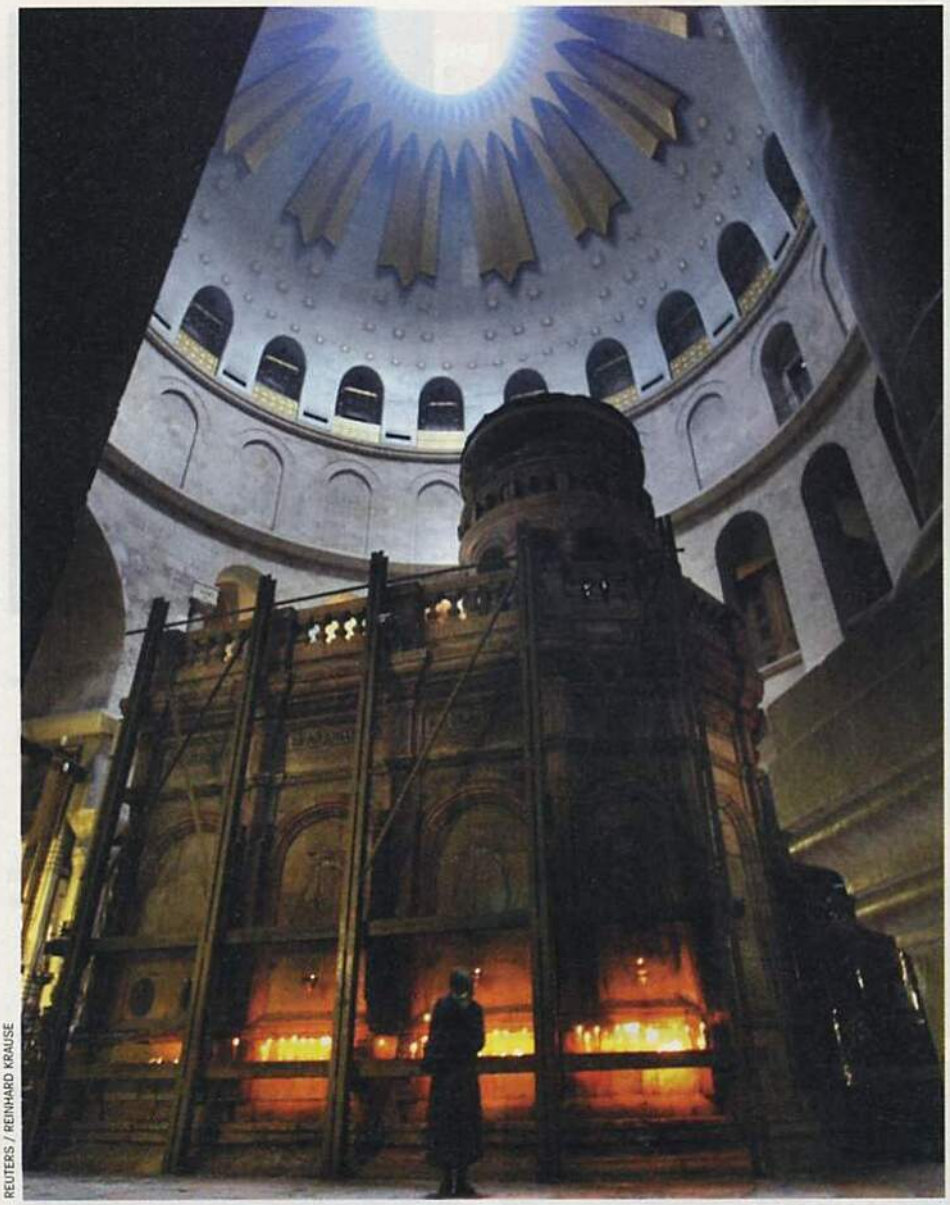
The dark interior smells of incense and cats

Hakim's mother was a Christian and his uncle was a former Patriarch of Jerusalem, and, as a result of their pressure, local Christians were soon able to begin rebuilding the Rotunda and Edicule. In 1099, Godfrey de Bouillon's Crusader army conquered Jerusalem, rebuilding the church, including a dome over the Rotunda, and consecrating it around 1163-1169. Under the Jerusalem-based Templars, the Rotunda became the source of the standard round design used for Templar churches, the Temple in London being an example. The Crusader rebuilding brought both Golgotha and the tomb under one roof, and this Romanesque building is what you see today.

You get to the church from a small square, the Parvis, lying off a narrow street. As buildings cluster up to the walls on all sides, it's difficult to get any impression from the outside of the scale of the building. The Parvis is supported by a vaulted cistern incorporating a retaining wall from Hadrian's temple. You enter through one of two Crusader arches (the other is bricked up) and past a bored looking policeman; by the door is a pile of almost full-sized crosses for the devout to carry along the Via Dolorosa.

Normally there is a seething mass of tourists and pilgrims inside, but at present tourists are few, allowing the visitor to wander in peace. The interior is dark and decrepit with the appearance of a Piranesi prison drawing, and it smells of cats and incense. Immediately inside is a slab of exposed rock, said to be where Christ's body was prepared for burial. Golgotha is to your right, and a steep flight of steps leads up to the Calvary chapel at the summit of the rock pillar. The chapel is divided into Greek and Franciscan areas by pillars. Underneath the Greek altar is a hole into which you can put your hand and feel the socket in which the cross is said to have stood. Below the chapel, the actual rock of Golgotha is exposed, and you can see a fissure in it which Jewish Christians, having transferred the legend of Adam's burial on the site of Solomon's temple to Golgotha, say is where Christ's blood flowed down to Adam's grave, restoring him to life.

To your left lies the tomb, a Greek monk



REUTERS / REINHARD KRAUSE

REUTERS / REINHARD KRAUSE

LEFT: The Edicule.

ABOVE A worshipper kisses the cracked paving stone – last of the Stations of the Cross – within the church.

standing guard over it. The current Edicule dates from 1809 and is a hideously ornate baroque wedding cake. Since 1934, its sides have been shored up with steel girders following an earthquake in 1927. Through a low door you enter an antechamber, the Chapel of the Angel, with a portion of the rolling stone door preserved therein, and from there into the tomb itself, which is about five or six feet (1.5m or 1.8m) square with marble walls. To the right lies a raised slab covered with marble. It appears to be cracked, but this is subterfuge – the crack is a groove carved into the slab to render it valueless to looters. Single burial couches, as found here, are uncommon in Jewish tombs of the time, but fit the Gospel account of this being an unused tomb; re-used tombs would have had extra burial slabs added over generations.

Above is the dome of the Rotunda, restored in 1960 – although with much argument between the various orders that enjoy rights to the site (Greek Orthodox, Franciscans, Armenians, Copts, Syrians and Ethiopians). Saladin started this divisive arrangement in order to avoid dominance of one sect. He gave the keys of the building to the Muslim Nuseibe family (with whom they remain to this day) to avoid one group locking the others out.

Every Orthodox Easter, the miracle of the Descent of the Holy Fire takes place. This has been documented since at least the early 9th century, but may go back to the 4th century. The Edicule is inspected by representatives from the civil power, now the Israelis, and declared to be free from all fires and fire-making materials, and the door is sealed with wax. At midnight the Greek Orthodox Patriarch enters. In the words of Patriarch Diodorus, interviewed in 1998: "From the core of the stone on which Jesus lay, an indefinable light pours forth… it usually has a blue tint… at a certain point the light forms a column and lights the candles and lamps in the tomb." From these, the fire is then passed out through portholes in the side of the Edicule to the Coptic and Armenian Patriarchs and the waiting crowd. This only seems to work for Eastern Christian clerics; it failed when the Church was in the hands of the Crusaders, nothing happening until they let the Greek Patriarch into the Edicule. This regularly occurring miracle is little known in the Western Church and does not seem to have been investigated.

Following a fire in 1808 (either deliberately started by Armenian monks or accidentally by drunken Greek priests, depending on your source) the Greek Orthodox gained rebuilding rights from the Ottoman rulers of Jerusalem and hence dominance of the church. The Greeks shamefully destroyed much Crusader work, including the tombs of Godfrey de Bouillon and Baldwin, the first Latin King of Jerusalem, of which only the supporting benches now remain. There is a certain degree of irony in Godfrey being buried 100ft (30m) or so from the tomb where the Resurrection supposedly took place. He is alleged by some to be a founder of the Prieuré de Sion, the shadowy organisation said to maintain that Christ's bloodline is carried by the descendants of the Merovingian kings.

The Greek Orthodox have their main chapel in what was the choir of the Crusader church (which is also the centre of the world in Eastern Christian reckoning), and they confined the other sects to chapels scattered around the edges of the church. The Franciscans have a number of chapels, one containing a red granite pillar, believed to be where Jesus was scourged (traditionally located on Mount Sion until the 10th century) and one in the old cistern where Helena found the Cross. The Armenians have an underground chapel dating back to Constantine's time. The Syrians have a humble chapel in a grotto in the quarry side, lit only by candles and quite magical. The Copts have a gaudy 19th century chapel about the size of a large broom cupboard tacked onto the back of the Edicule and the Ethiopians have a monastery on the roof of the church, alleged to containe the cell where Jesus was held prior to the crucifixion.

The mystery of this church has never been fully explored; the Greek Orthodox are unlikely to allow investigation of the Holy Fire and although Golgotha and the Calvary chapel were recently excavated, it is only tradition which associates this site with the crucifixion. Since its reconstruction in about 1012-1014, after al-Hakim's destruction, it has undergone two rebuildings in 1555 and 1809 as well as various repairs, and these projects have left it with successive strata. No report exists of what remains of the original tomb. The Edicule is now in a poor state, its walls visibly bulge and the steel girders are an eyesore, but now there is an opportunity to peel away the layers and reveal, for the first time since 325, the rock-cut tomb believed by many to be that of Christ. FT

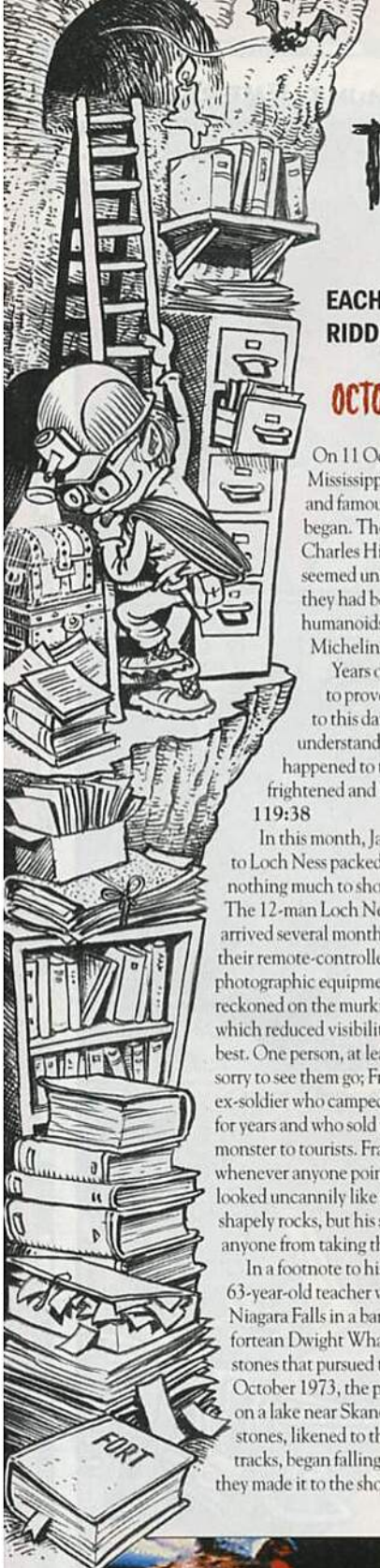
DR JOHN ROWE is a London based clinical psychologist and honorary visiting psychologist at a hospital in Palestine.

Share your travellers' tales with *FT*! Send submissions, postcards and souvenirs to: The Editor, Fortean Times, IFG Ltd, 9 Dallington St, London EC1V 0BQ or to david.sutton@ifgmags.com

PHENOMENOMIX

HUNT EMERSON

EARLY ONE MORNING IN GULLY BULL'S PHENOMENA-STUFFED OFFICE...
GOT ANY FEET PHENOMENA?
FEET PHENOMENA?
YES- STRANGE HAPPENINGS OF A PODOLOGICAL TYPE... ALIEN INSOLES... POLTER-TOES... THAT SORT OF THING...
WHY DO YOU ASK? WHO ARE YOU?
I...I AM...
...DOCTOR WEIRDFOOT! PHENOMENOLOGICAL CHIROPODIST!
MY MISSION IS TO ROAM THE EARTH, SEEKING OUT WEIRD FEET AND TRIMMING THEIR CORNS!
RATHER A SPECIALIZED CALLING, ISN'T IT?
BUSINESS IS LOUSY, LET ME TELL YOU!
THAT'S WHY I WONDERED IF YOU MIGHT HAVE ANY PECULIAR FOOT CASES ON YOUR FILES--SOMETHING I COULD HAVE A GO AT...
HMMM... LET ME SEE... AH! HOW ABOUT...
...THIS!!
GREAT TWINKLING TOENAILS! WHAT IS IT?
CORN CIRCLES
THROB
PAIN
ITCH
THROB
ITCH
THROB
ITCH
A-F
F-K
LET ME AT IT!!
F-K
SLAM
F-K
NOW MAYBE I CAN GET ON WITH MY BREAKFAST---
CRUNCHY CORNS



TALES FROM THE VAULT

EACH MONTH WE SEND FORTEAN TIMES FOUNDER BOB RICKARD DOWN INTO THE DARKEST, COBWEB-RIDDEN DEPTHS OF THE VAULTS OF FORTEAN TOWERS IN SEARCH OF STORIES FROM FT'S PAST.

OCTOBER 1973

On 11 October, in Pascagoula, Mississippi, one of the most intriguing and famous of alien-abduction cases began. The two local fishermen – Charles Hickson and Calvin Parker – seemed unshakeable in their belief that they had been levitated into a UFO by humanoids with lobster-like claws and Michelin Man-like ribbed torsos.

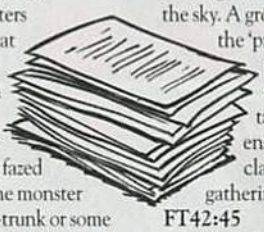
Years of investigations have failed to prove the event was hoaxed and, to this day, we have little understanding of precisely what happened to these two genuinely frightened and bewildered men. **FT42:73, 119:38**

In this month, Japan's first major expedition to Loch Ness packed up and went home with nothing much to show for their £250,000 budget. The 12-man Loch Ness Monster Search Party had arrived several months earlier in high spirits with their remote-controlled submarine, packed with photographic equipment, but they had not reckoned on the murkiness of the waters which reduced visibility to a few feet at best. One person, at least, was not sorry to see them go; Frank Searle, an ex-soldier who camped by the loch for years and who sold pictures of the monster to tourists. Frank was hardly fazed whenever anyone pointed out that the monster looked uncannily like a floating tree-trunk or some shapely rocks, but his steely glance would deter anyone from taking the matter further. **FT2:13**

In a footnote to his article on Annie Taylor, a 63-year-old teacher who, in 1901, went over the Niagara Falls in a barrel and survived, Canadian fortean Dwight Whalen tells of a shower of small stones that pursued two men for some time. In October 1973, the pair were fishing from a boat on a lake near Skaneateles, NY, when the stones, likened to the 'cinders' used on railway tracks, began falling all around them. Spooked, they made it to the shore and then to their car. To their horror, the rain of stones followed, pelting their car for several miles. **FT45:62-66**

SURGEONS REMOVED A 9-INCH SNAKE FROM HER STOMACH

OCTOBER 1983



Between July and November more than 100,000 pilgrims trekked to a hilltop shrine near Villa Alemena, a small village northwest of Chile's capital, Santiago, in high expectation of catching a glimpse of the Virgin Mary. What they saw was a weedy orphan boy, Miguel Poblete, falling to the ground in a trance or holding one-sided conversations while staring at the sky. A group of men relayed messages similar to the 'prophecies' of more-famous Catholic visionaries. He'd point to the sky and ask the throng to wave crucifixes and take photos of the sun, and in the ensuing frenzy, an inevitable few claimed to see the Virgin. The gatherings peaked in October 1983. **FT42:45**

Tales of snakes, worms and frogs developing in the stomachs of swimmers who have gulped polluted water are generally regarded as folk myth, but here is one that seems well-attested. An 11-year-old girl, Doreen Lucket, went swimming in the Mississippi delta near Darrow and swallowed rather a lot of water. Complaining of aching guts the next day, she was taken to hospital in Baton Rouge, where an X-ray revealed a long 'foreign object' in her stomach. Surgical intervention was needed to remove the object, a 9 in (23cm) long garter snake that was still alive. **FT30:43**

OCTOBER 1993

In a remote hamlet in north-west Thailand a hill tribe community killed each other with knives, flintlocks, spades and hoes. Nineteen children were among the 53 dead and six of the eight families were wiped out. This extreme form of 'mass suicide' was triggered by Ca Van Liem, an army deserter and con man. He settled there in 1985 and persuaded them that, in return for gold, he could save them from a worldwide deluge forecast for the millennium in 2000. It seems that Liem, fearing exposure, summoned family leaders to his home and – in a bizarre foreshadowing of the Heaven's Gate mass suicide - told them it was time to leave this world. After a feast, they burned their houses, killed Liem, and then each other. **FT73:7**

A report out this month revealed that in the 175 square miles (453 sq km) of the Jharia coal fields in eastern India, 65 major under-ground fires were known, some of which had been burning since 1916. Steam and fumes belched from huge crevasses that glowed red at night and, in some places, the ground itself was on fire. It was estimated that the subterranean fires had consumed 37 million tons of coking coal and even if they were doused and their air vents sealed they would take up to 86 years to cool down sufficiently to be accessible. **FT73:23**

Several thousand folk converged on Hong Kong's Aberdeen fish market on the evening of the 12th, eager to see a 'mermaid'. Since midday, rumours sped through the city after Hien To, the owner of a fishing boat, called a friend to say he was heading back to port after he had netted a limbless creature with a pointed beak and long hair. By the evening the description had inflated to include blond hair and a voice that spoke English. The fishing community had been agog with a similar rumour the previous month, when it was believed that two mermaids had been caught and released at sea. By the time Mr To docked, early next morning, the crowd was dismayed to learn he had caught only sun fish. He suggested that someone made up the rumour to bring his family bad luck. **FT74:12.**

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IN CINEMAS FROM AUGUST 29